

INSPECTION REPORT

Diss High School

Diss

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique Reference Number: 121184

Inspection Number: 187443

Headteacher: Mr S C Ballantyne

Reporting inspector: R Hedge
2932

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 November 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. H P G Coe
Date of previous inspection:	January 1996

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W S Barton, Lay inspector		Leadership and management Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Partnership with parents and the community Efficiency Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
D M Green	Mathematics	
J N Hedge	English	
J Seed	Equal Opportunities	
P Sellwood	Science	
	Design and Technology (DT)	
	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
D Harris	Modern foreign languages	
F Earle	History	
	Religious education	
B Greasley	Geography	
A P McGough	Art	Staffing, accommodation and resources
A Lees	Music	
P Wall	Physical education (PE)	
V Kerr	Special educational needs (SEN)	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress – they enter the school at an average level but thereafter standards are consistently above average.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good, leading to clear organization and procedures carefully focused on raising standards and improving provision.
- Relationships between pupils and with staff, pupils’ behaviour and the attitude pupils demonstrate in lessons are all very good. This helps pupils to learn well.
- Provision for pupils’ moral, social and cultural development are very good.
- There is a very strong programme of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Pupils are very well cared for and are well supported.
- The school has very good links with its local community
- The school is managed with considerable financial efficiency. Resources are very effectively used.

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2 Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Provision for RE is inadequate. Too little time and resources are allowed so pupils’ standards are below average.
- II. Pupils make limited progress in modern languages at Key Stage 4 and standards are below average.
- III. Provision for pupils who have difficulties with reading and writing has some good features, such as strong teaching in Year 7, but they get too little extra help after Year 7 and their progress is not well monitored.

This is a very good and still improving school whose strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. The governors’ action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

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3 How the school has improved since the last inspection

Standards have improved considerably at each Key Stage and in the sixth form. The school planned well to overcome most of the weaknesses highlighted in the previous report. Provision for ICT, for example, has improved considerably. Nevertheless, the weaknesses in RE provision outlined at that time have not been properly addressed. Teaching is much better – there is now virtually no unsatisfactory teaching and a substantial proportion is good. The Headteacher and senior managers have focused their attention on devising strategies for raising standards still further. The quality of teaching is systematically monitored and there are regular discussions between departmental staff and the Headteacher to sharpen up planning. Although individual assemblies meet the requirements for worship, requirements are not met overall because of the difficulty in accommodating all pupils in the hall.

4 Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999 (Key Stage 3) and 1998 (Key Stage 4 and post 16):

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
			well above average	A
Key Stage 3 Tests	A	C	above average	B
			average	C
			below average	D
GCSE Examinations	C	E	well below average	E
A/AS – levels	A	n/a		

The school's results have improved well in recent years. GCSE results are improving at a rate which is better than the national rate. GCSE results compare unfavourably with those of similar schools because of the school's policy, changed in 1998, of providing a specific course for a number of low attaining pupils which did not lead to GCSE. This practice depressed the overall GCSE points score of the year group.

5 Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	DT, ICT, art, music	Geography, RE
Years 10-11	Good	DT, ICT, art, music	Modern foreign languages
Sixth form	Good	DT, ICT, art	geography
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is a major strength of the school. There is almost no unsatisfactory teaching. Three quarters of teaching is good and a third is very good or excellent.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

6 Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Pupils behave very well in class and around the site. In almost all lessons relationships between pupils and with staff are good. Pupils have productive attitudes to lessons and are prepared to work hard. Attendance is well above average for a secondary school.
Attendance	
Ethos*	The school provides a very positive atmosphere in which pupils are valued, well taught and can give of their best.
Leadership and management	The Headteacher's leadership is very impressive. Management is purposeful and energetic. Governors work closely with senior managers.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced, though provision for RE is inadequate. Very good extra-curricular programme.
Pupils with special educational needs	These pupils make generally good progress, though provision for pupils with poor literacy skills is poorly co-ordinated after Year 7 and their progress is inadequately monitored.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	There is very good provision for moral, social and cultural development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, but hindered by lack of time for RE.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	There is good accommodation though temporary classrooms used for RE and music are inadequate and limit what pupils and staff can reasonably achieve. Less than average funds have been spent on learning resources and although teachers manage this situation well there is a lack of books in several subjects and a shortage of computer hardware.
Value for money	Very good value for money. Pupils make good progress at modest financial expense.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

7 The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- IV. The standards pupils reach and the progress they make are much appreciated.
- V. Parents are impressed by the effect that the values and attitudes promoted by the school have on pupils.
- VI. Parents find the school approachable if problems arise.
- VII. Pupils' good behaviour.
- VIII. A high proportion of pupils likes school.

What some parents are not happy about

Both at their meeting with the registered inspector and in response to a questionnaire, parents expressed considerable support for the school. Inspectors largely endorse these positive views.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

8 In order to raise further the standards of pupils' attainments and the quality of the school's provision, the governors and senior managers should:

ensure that effective provision is made for religious education by:

1. increasing the time devoted to the subject;
2. improving the resources available to the subject;
3. improving the quality of accommodation used for the subject.

(paragraphs 22, 44, 79, 83, 84, 200, 206, 209, 210, 211.)

In addition to this Key Issue, governors may wish to include action to meet the following weaknesses in their action plan:

1. The standards reached at Key Stage 4 in modern foreign languages are below average and below standards reached in other subjects in the school. Measures should be taken to enhance the motivation of boys, to target underachieving pupils for mentoring in Year 10, to raise levels of intellectual challenge and pace in lessons for middle and higher attaining pupils, to introduce a wider range of teaching methods to increase stimulus and enable pupils to practise the language and to ensure that appropriate work is set to enable pupils at different levels of attainment, particularly higher attainers, to extend their language experience.
(paragraphs 17, 19, 37, 177, 181, 182, 184.)
2. There is insufficient whole-school planning and management of provision for pupils with weak reading and writing skills after Year 7. Their particular needs should be more specifically met through the provision of extra help in class or by withdrawing them for part of their time for carefully planned support. Their progress should be more systematically monitored.
(paragraphs 23, 38, 46, 95, 100)

2. INTRODUCTION

2. Characteristics of the school

9 Diss High School is a comprehensive school with 1083 boys and girls currently on roll. The proportion of pupils of ethnic minority heritage is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. There is relatively little acute social deprivation in the area and on the whole pupils come from families in above average economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN) is broadly average, though an above average proportion of pupils have statements of SEN.

10 The profile of pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school conforms closely to the national picture. Their results in national tests conducted at the end of Key Stage 2 as well as reading tests administered by the school show that overall levels of attainment are average and that the school's pupils represent the full range of attainment.

11 The school is popular with parents and is oversubscribed. It serves the town of Diss and the rural area around. In 1999 more than eight out of ten pupils stayed in full time education at the school leaving age and 57% of Year 13 pupils went on to higher education.

12 The school's targets for 2000 are that at least 55% of Year 11 pupils should gain at least 5 GCSE passes in the range A*-C, that 97.5% should gain at least 1 A*-C GCSE pass and that pupils should average 39.9 GCSE points.

13 The school's published aims are:

- to provide all pupils with an appropriate, broad education within a safe environment;
- to encourage academic enquiry, application and achievement as a life long process;
- to help pupils develop spiritual and moral values and an aesthetic sensibility;
- to foster self-discipline and respect, consideration for others and an awareness of human rights and responsibilities;
- to promote harmonious relationships among staff, parents and the community;
- to give all pupils a sense of achievement and of being valued.

2. **14 Key indicators**

2. **Attainment at Key Stage 3¹**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
for latest reporting year:	1999	80	78	158

2. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	68	65	61
	Girls	70	59	59
	Total	138	124	120
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	87 (51)	83 (72)	76 (58)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	50 (22)	53 (47)	32 (28)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

2. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	50	69	56
	Girls	60	62	51
	Total	110	111	107
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	69 (64)	83 (76)	68 (76)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	31 (31)	53 (51)	34 (34)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

1
Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest Reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1998	74	76	150

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils	Boys	40	59	68
Achieving standard specified	Girls	50	71	73
	Total	90	130	141
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	60 (61)	87 (90)	94 (96)
	National	46 (45)	87 (88)	93 (92)

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1998	49	42	91

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.6 (14.6)	20.2 (14.2)	19.1 (14.4)	0 (0)	1.6 (0)	1.3 (0)
National	-	-	17.8	-	-	2.8

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and Percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate
School	10 (20)	60 (70)
National		79.1

.....

- 2 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year
- 3 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed			%
Through absence for the latest complete Reporting year:	Authorised	School	7.1
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.3
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

2.

2.

2. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during The previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	27
	Permanent	0

2. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	34
	Satisfactory or better	100
	Less than satisfactory	0

2. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

2. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

2. Attainment and progress

15 Overall standards of attainment have risen since the last inspection. Standards in national tests taken by the school's pupils in their primary schools, the results of standardised tests administered in Year 7 and observations of Year 7 pupils indicate that the overall standards of pupils on entry to the school are average.

16 Pupils make good progress during their first three years in the school. Over the three years 1996 to 1998 both boys' and girls' scores in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average. In 1999 results were well above average and average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. English tests results have fluctuated in recent years: they were much better in 1999 than in 1998 at a level well above average and well above average for similar schools. 1999 results in science and mathematics were also well above average and average for similar schools. In recent years girls have outperformed boys. These results indicate that pupils make good progress in their first three years in the school.

17 Good progress is maintained through Key Stage 4. GCSE results have improved over recent years at a rate faster than the national improvement. The proportion of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSE grades at A*-C in 1998 was well above average and above average in comparison with similar schools. The school's practice of not entering a proportion of pupils with SEN for 5 or more GCSE examinations means that the proportions of pupils overall who gain at least 5, or at least 1 GCSE at grade C are below average and well below the average for similar schools. For the same reason, the average GCSE points score is also depressed. This practice of maintaining a non-GCSE group ceased in 1998. Over the three years 1996 to 1998, both boys' and girls' results were above average. Limited progress in modern languages at Key Stage 4 results in GCSE scores which are below average.

18 Post 16 pupils make similarly good progress. In spite of a poor year in 1997, results at GCE A level over recent years have been above average.

19 Pupils have good speaking and listening skills. In mathematics both boys and girls speak and listen well. They listen carefully in science and in DT and ICT where listening is better than speaking. Lower attainers are enthusiastic and confident speakers. Discussion in some Year 12 and 13 English and geography is excellent. Pupils were well prepared, used technical terminology well and listened carefully to each other. Both boys and girls participate fluently in discussion in history at Key Stage 3. In Year 9 pupils in RE listened very respectfully. At Key Stage 4 pupils studying leisure and tourism made good quality presentations to their peers. Most pupils read well and have little difficulty accessing the curriculum although some pupils are not coping with reading in geography and in mathematics. In history at Year 9 pupils' writing is imaginative and covers a range of styles. In business studies pupils develop skills in writing effectively in appropriate report style. Good examples of writing were also evident in PE, geography and in art though writing skills are underdeveloped at Key Stage 4 in modern languages.

20 Levels of numeracy are good and enable pupils to make good sense of number wherever necessary across the curriculum. In science, mathematical skills are generally above average, with good graphical skills and skills of measurement. In history structured work in relation to population statistics leads to good graphs. In geography pupils' knowledge of statistics is satisfactory, but the range of applications is relatively narrow. In ICT pupils are very good with control, with working with

sequences of commands and with programming post 16. In GCSE business studies numerical skills are well used to solve complex problems. In textiles pupils show good skills of measurement and use patterns well.

21 Competence in ICT has progressed well since the last inspection. Pupils use hardware with confidence and reach good standards. ICT is used effectively in mathematics and DT, though pupils have too little experience of using ICT in English and modern languages which hinders their progress.

22 Standards are particularly good in art. High quality teaching and good curriculum planning results in very good progress by pupils. Imaginative work is strong and pupils develop comprehensive skills. The high quality of pupils' work in art is a strong feature and there is pupils' work of considerable quality displayed throughout the school. Standards in RE are below average, largely because of the inadequate time allocated to the subject.

23 From Year 7 onwards, good teaching, good planning and careful organisation lead to good progress. Progress made by pupils with SEN is variable. Pupils with physical difficulties who are able to attend school full time are well supported by teachers and ancillary staff and make progress which is in line with their peers. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress in overcoming their behavioural problems arrangements do not always ensure good progress in the associated learning difficulties which many of these pupils experience. Most pupils with learning difficulties make good or very good progress in Year 7 in their literacy skills and significantly improve their reading ages and all make considerable gains in self confidence and classroom skills. After Year 7, however, most pupils with learning difficulties have no further specialist teaching and their progress across the curriculum is less secure.

2. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

24 Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They come to class expecting to work and to learn, apply themselves effectively, and are able to maintain concentration throughout their lessons. These productive attitudes, combined with the high expectations teachers have of them, enable pupils to make good progress. Behaviour in lessons and around the site is very good. No pupils were permanently excluded last year.

25 Relationships are cordial, relaxed and confident. Pupils relate well to their teachers and are generally mature and very well behaved. They are responsible and trustworthy, and co-operate well, assisting and supporting one another, sharing knowledge and understanding. This is particularly notable in the number of volunteers for the paired reading and mentoring schemes. There is respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others as demonstrated by their response in support of charitable activities for Ghana.

26 Pupils show pride in their work and their school. They are customarily polite and courteous toward other adults and at ease in their company. They respect property and value their environment and things about them. As a result, there are high standards of care for the equipment, buildings and grounds of the school. The disciplinary code is well defined, effective and clearly understood. Rewards and sanctions are applied evenly, appropriately and effectively and parents are kept fully informed.

27 Pupils use their independence and assume responsibility whenever the opportunity arises. Community awareness is shown both within the school and towards the wider world. Charity activities are initiated and organised by pupils to support causes that they have espoused. A strong Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme promotes community service.

28 The attitudes of most special needs pupils to all aspects of school life are good, they work very hard in class and their behaviour matches the high standards evident in all pupils. Many with serious learning and physical difficulties cheerfully undertake additional workloads in order to compensate for their disadvantages. The personal development of pupils with special educational needs is greatly enhanced by the care with which teaching and non-teaching staff foster self-confidence and independence.

29 This all contributes to a very positive, stable, learning environment. The evidence of this inspection endorses that of the last inspection in 1996. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning continue to be very good and contribute significantly to their achievements.

2. Attendance

30 Attendance is above average for secondary schools and contributes very effectively towards pupils' learning. Registers are maintained efficiently and absences are closely followed up. There is less than average unauthorised absence, and authorised absence is managed with care.

31 Pupils generally arrive on time and are punctual to lessons, although occasionally buses may be delayed. Bronze, Silver, and Gold Certificates reward full attendance. Attendance and punctuality to lessons contribute very effectively toward pupils' levels of attainment and their progress.

32 At the time of the last inspection in 1996 attendance was good. Since that time attendance levels have improved further.

2. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

2. Teaching

33 The general quality of teaching is good. Of the teaching observed in lessons during the inspection, about three-quarters was good, about a third was very good and virtually none was unsatisfactory. This high quality of teaching makes a major contribution to the good progress made by pupils at all stages and in virtually all lessons and is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. There is little difference in the quality of teaching at different stages.

34 Lesson planning is strong. Teachers across the curriculum use appropriate teaching methods to meet pupils' needs and sequence lessons well through careful planning. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in the planning of ICT lessons. Teaching is now strong. In business studies planning is very effective in promoting progress and teachers use a good balance of explanation and well-planned tasks for pupils. Most teachers have expert knowledge of their subject. The best English lessons have a strong academic base and are conducted with great enthusiasm for the subject, which is communicated to pupils and strongly promotes learning. Post 16 mathematics teaching is based on teachers' very good subject knowledge. Indeed, the teaching of mathematics is generally very strong. Planning is good, exposition is clear, expectations are appropriately high, especially in post 16 work. The quality of mathematics teaching is directly related to the high standards

pupils reach.

35 Teachers have high expectations of what pupils might achieve. In addition to mathematics, rigorous teaching leading to rapid progress was seen in many lessons across the curriculum. Science teachers expect high standards of accuracy, correct terminology and presentation. Art teaching is generally very good and a strength of the school. There are high expectations, challenging lessons, effective working practice in the art rooms and lively pace in lessons. Art teachers demonstrate techniques carefully and know their pupils well. As a result, pupils make very good progress and reach high standards.

36 Teachers manage pupils well in class and as a result pupils concentrate hard, stay on task and learn effectively. In most lessons there is rapid pace and little time is wasted. Teachers talk to pupils with enthusiasm about their subject – a particular strength in Latin and classical studies, where pupils were seen listening with fascination to the teacher’s presentation. There is some very good teaching in DT, where positive relationships with pupils lead to lively discussion and exchange of ideas. In history, the quality of some teacher explanation of complex events led to good pupil understanding. In many modern language lessons, especially at Key Stage 3, there is effective and accurate use of the target language to drive up pupils’ skills. Much post 16 teaching of languages is very rigorous. Much music teaching is very good. Clear explanations and enthusiasm enable pupils to understand complex ideas about music. Instrumental teaching is often lively and enthusiastic. PE teachers plan well and encourage pupils to reach good standards. In careers and PSE lessons teaching is strong.

37 Within the generally strong picture there are still some areas which require attention. In some history lessons pupils with SEN need to have materials more specifically tailored to their individual needs if they are to make effective progress. Some Key Stage 4 modern language lessons lack rigour and focus, so progress is hindered. Some Key Stage 3 teaching in geography lacks intellectual challenge and expectations are too low. Overall, though, the quality of teaching effectively promotes good progress and standards of work.

38 The observed teaching of low attaining sets by the SEN department was all very good and characterised by very good understanding of pupils’ problems and imaginative planning which created good learning opportunities. Across the wider curriculum the teaching of low attaining sets is usually well planned, provides suitable work and motivates pupils well. All teachers are sensitive to the problems experienced by pupils with learning difficulties but sometimes lack of skill leads to poor learning opportunities when, for example, pupils fail to cope with badly designed work sheets.

39 The only focused teaching of literacy for weak and poor readers and writers consists of a weekly pre-school session for some and a paired reading scheme which links older and younger pupils under the general supervision of the head of the pastoral system. Although valuable, this work is unstructured and poorly monitored.

40 In all the classes observed the quality of extra support for pupils with SEN was very good. Ancillary staff have very good relationships with the pupils in their care, are careful to encourage independence and have a professional status within the classroom.

41 Pupils experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties also benefit from individual tuition and counselling provided by visiting local authority specialist teachers. The local authority “Visiting Teacher Service” supports pupils whose physical problems prevent full time attendance by teaching them at their homes.

2. **The curriculum and assessment**

42 Curriculum planning is effective in meeting the needs of most students. The National Curriculum is in place and National Curriculum requirements are met. In addition to statutory provision, the curriculum opportunities pupils enjoy are considerably enhanced by the provision of classical studies for all pupils at Key Stage 3. Vocational courses are successfully provided for older pupils and there is good provision of business education. Since the last inspection, ICT provision has been substantially improved. There are now discrete ICT courses that enable pupils to reach good levels of skill, which they have the opportunity to use in many curriculum areas. Key Stage 4 and post 16 pupils make course choices from a good range of options.

43 Provision for pupils' personal and social education is successfully planned through a PSE programme taught by a specialist team. These arrangements work well. Planning meets pupils' needs in respect of the provision of clear and well-presented health and sex education. The PSE courses make a good contribution to pupils' social education and their understanding of contemporary political, moral and social issues. There is good teaching in PSE. Post 16 pupils have a similar programme that includes provision for careers education. The careers programme for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is very effective. Planning is good, covers the necessary issues, such as preparation for optional Key Stage 4 courses and for transition to post 16 education. The quality of careers teaching is good. Individual careers guidance is well organised and appreciated by pupils. There is well-organised work experience for Key Stage 4 pupils which benefits substantially from the support of local employers.

44 RE provision, a key issue in the previous report, remains a serious problem. Statutory responsibilities are not met in this respect. Too little time is allowed for the subject. In Key Stage 3 this leads to over-concentration on the content of faith traditions and too few opportunities for reflection and personal response. The PSE programme in Key Stage 4 offers some RE, as does the post 16 core studies programme, but in both cases there is far too little time available to do justice to the local agreed syllabus. In these respects there has been no improvement since the last inspection.

45 Pupils with SEN follow the common curriculum for all pupils. The additional support needed by pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is largely an extension of the very effective work of the pastoral system - particularly for older pupils. Full use is made of the services provided by the local authority. The school has also developed a very imaginative and effective scheme whereby pupils are linked with adults in the local community who provide counselling and personal and social education. Pupils with physical or sensory difficulties are helped to access the curriculum by the use of relevant equipment and good support by teachers and ancillary staff both in and out of the classroom.

46 The additional support required by pupils with learning difficulties is based on grouping most of these pupils into the lowest attaining sets where they can be provided with suitable work and learning opportunities. Pupils who are placed in the lowest sets for English in Year 7 and one of the lowest sets in year 10 are taught by the special needs co-ordinator who is able to address their problems with literacy. Beyond this arrangement there is no co-ordinated specialist teaching provision for pupils with poor literacy skills other than the weekly pre-school session attended by some pupils. There is insufficient extra support for these pupils, either in mainstream classes or through withdrawal from some lessons, to enable them to access the curriculum adequately. In history lessons, for example, pupils with reading problems have difficulty with technical terminology when materials are not specifically adapted to meet their needs. The paired reading scheme is helpful but is not sufficiently structured or monitored. The school's new policy on spelling is beginning to enable subject teachers to help pupils with this aspect of literacy.

47 The initial identification of special needs pupils is the responsibility of the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) who liaises closely with the feeder primary schools. The SENCO constructs Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for pupils with learning, physical, sensory, specific learning and autistic problems. These IEPs form a good basis for work within the special needs department but, because targets are imprecise, they do not enable subject teachers or support staff to focus on and monitor individual progress.

48 The pastoral staff construct IEPs for pupils experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties as they emerge, which help teachers to help pupils to overcome their behavioural problems but do not address associated learning difficulties.

49 There are some other more minor problems with curriculum arrangements. The curriculum for English is weak on providing opportunities for using ICT and experiencing drama. Pupils' experience in art and science is limited by poor access to ICT hardware.

50 There is very good provision of extra-curricular opportunities for enhancing pupils' experience. Sports provision is very good, with about 13 sports programmes as well as school teams. Drama and music are popular areas with pupils and there is a good array of voluntary activities related to subjects.

51 Assessments of pupils' levels of attainment and progress are used carefully to place pupils in teaching groups according to their levels of attainment. This process is largely accurately carried out and results in arrangements that work well. The grouping of subjects for this purpose can cause some difficulties in modern foreign languages, where the flexibility to place pupils in appropriate groups is affected by the needs of other subjects, but it is difficult to see how the school can address this without considerable disruption to other parts of the curriculum.

52 Most departments make accurate assessments of pupils' progress and use assessment data to make sure that work matches pupils' capability. Marking is sound and regular feedback is given on progress. The assessment issues noted in the previous report have been largely resolved. Curriculum shortcomings in history and ICT, noted in the previous report, have also been successfully overcome.

2. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

53 The school has responded positively to the last inspection, especially in reviewing the approach to pupils' spiritual development and improving opportunities for them to develop an awareness of multi-cultural issues. In all aspects of the life of the school, teachers act as good role models for pupils.

54 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Collective worship has been improved since the last inspection by the bringing in of a broader range of speakers and encouraging more members of staff to be involved in presentation. Local church groups and speakers from organisation such as the East Anglian Hospice, Young Cancer Sufferers, Save the Children and Oxfam have presented pupils with opportunities to reflect upon significant aspects of human experience. During the week of the inspection collective worship was linked to the Christian year and to the experience of people facing the pressures and difficulties of life in ways which were relevant to pupils' experience. Pupils, however, are rather passive listeners and opportunities for them to participate in a more active way are limited, though they are clearly willing to do so if asked. Currently the provision

for collective worship does not fully meet statutory requirements. Training has been provided for staff to help them to identify opportunities for spiritual development in the curriculum. These are not widely taken up in practice however, though good opportunities are provided in art and in music. Pupils are willing to participate in such activities in RE, but restriction in time inhibits good quality engagement with questions of meaning and purpose and in the expression of personal beliefs and values.

55 The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. A well-planned PSE programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' moral development, providing opportunities to consider contemporary moral issues and to formulate their own moral and ethical opinions on issues such as crime, drug abuse, racism, relationships and human rights. Pupils are encouraged to act responsibly and to consider the effects of their actions on others. The school supports a wide range of charities and pupils are encouraged to become personally involved in fund-raising and promoting the work of aid organisations. During the week of the inspection sixth form students and pupils in Year 7 were working together to raise funds for development work in Ghana. A notable feature of these activities is the long-standing commitment to supporting a young Kenyan through regular gifts to an educational charity working in Kenya. There is an evident commitment to anti-racist education and to multi-cultural education. The school has worked with Norfolk Education and Action for Development in providing conferences for post 16 pupils on development and related issues. There is an active sixth form Human Rights Group. Visitors from a wide range of aid agencies and ethnic and religious backgrounds are invited into the school on a regular basis and the school has hosted or been involved in a variety of activities and initiatives designed to promote understanding and awareness of the multi-cultural nature of modern society. Opportunities are taken in art, history and RE to consider moral issues and staff generally encourage pupils to act responsibly in class and to respect each others beliefs and opinions. The humane care of animals is a positive feature of lessons in rural science.

56 The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school has strong links with a range of social services and agencies, which provide for a wide variety of activities for pupils in this area of their experience. This provision supports pupils' understanding of citizenship and encourages them to play an informed and active part in school life and their locality through the School Council and links with local government. Opportunities are provided in many subject areas for pupils to take responsibility and to develop social skills. Pupils co-operate well in music, and are supportive of each other, especially in ensemble work. DT provides good opportunities for the development of social skills in the study of childcare and development and pupils are taught to consider the safety of themselves and others in science. In many classes good relationships and co-operative attitudes were observed throughout the inspection.

57 The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. The school has improved the provision for pupils' multi-cultural awareness since the last inspection. A multi-cultural education committee has promoted activities that enable pupils to give practical expression to their interest. These have included conferences for post 16 pupils, an exhibition to inform and educate about the Holocaust and the celebration of One World Week. Visitors from the Buddhist and Jewish communities and from local Christian groups contribute to pupils' experience of the multi-cultural nature of modern society. A good range of extra-curricular activities provides opportunities for cultural enrichment. Work in art and music covers a wide range of periods and styles and visits to galleries, concerts and the theatre complement pupils' learning in class. Several subject areas offer opportunities for cultural enrichment to pupils, including exchange visits to France and Germany and visits to sites of historical interest in Britain and Italy. Teachers often stimulate pupils' awareness of the broader cultural significance of their subject in interesting ways such as the influence of Greek philosophy on the development of mathematics and the use of the Internet to research styles and fabrics in textiles.

58 The school has improved provision for multi-cultural awareness since the last inspection and has taken steps to improve approaches to pupils' spiritual development

2.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

59 The school is very effective in providing support and guidance for its pupils and in promoting their welfare and safety in school.

60 Each pupil is a member of a mixed ability form group. The form tutor has first responsibility for the pastoral care of members of the form, monitoring their good attendance, punctuality and uniform and promoting their good behaviour and progress. The work of form tutors is carefully co-ordinated by heads of year. The whole system is co-ordinated by a deputy head teacher. Form tutors and heads of year remain with their groups as far as possible throughout the school. Pupils feel secure within this system. They know they can approach their form tutor to discuss any concerns they may have in school, and are confident that they will receive any support they may need.

61 Documentation for the pastoral system is of a high standard. Succinct and appropriate statements of policy and procedure for all relevant areas are included in the staff handbook, which contains details about the school's day to day procedures. Good procedural advice is given in relation to school visits and journeys, the operation of the mini-bus, accidents and emergencies, fire and first aid, and general measures to promote the safety and welfare of all members of the school community. Essential information is also included in the handbook for parents.

62 Procedures for monitoring attendance are appropriate and effective. There is a good system for targeting the attendance of pupils with a record of high authorised absence whereby parents are telephoned at home or at work on the first day of absence. The presence of pupils is checked in every lesson and suspected truants reported to the school office immediately. As a result attendance is good, and the incidence of truancy very low.

63 Measures for the promotion of good behaviour are similarly very effective and are set out in staff and pupil handbooks. There is a clear structure for referral and a very good code of preferred practice for teachers. The rules for behaviour in various contexts are clear and the system is supported by a good structure of rewards and sanctions.

64 The academic progress of pupils is monitored in several ways. The monitoring of attainment is the responsibility of the subject teacher and department concerned and is effectively carried out through observation of classwork and homework and through tests and examinations. Subject teachers at the end of each half term award effort grades in the Autumn and Spring terms. These are collated on computer and printout slips and are made available to pupils through their form tutors. Pupils record the grades in their diaries, and these entries must be signed to show that parents have seen them. Letters are sent to inform parents of pupils whose efforts are particularly worthy of praise, and those whose efforts give cause for concern. Form tutors oversee this system well and reinforce it with discussions with students. It is further re-inforced by the setting of targets for the year in consultation with parents. Overall this constitutes a very strong system for maintaining a clear focus on pupils' effort.

65 The school has suitable procedures for child protection. It also has appropriate measures to guard against bullying and to deal with any that may arise. Pupils are aware of these and know what they should do if they become aware of any problems. Health and safety are generally very well promoted. The governors are responsible for the operation of the policy, risk assessment is undertaken in every department of the school and money has been well spent to try to ensure the safety of the

premises.

66 The pastoral system of the school has several notable special features including the mentor system, the Diss Youth Link and the Siege Project. Older pupils act as mentors to listen to the concerns of younger pupils, particularly in relation to bullying. They are very well trained through practical workshops. Their performance is evaluated and teachers are invited to comment on the working of the system. The Diss Youth Link aims to provide support for pupils who are in danger of under-achieving or becoming disaffected. It includes an analysis of needs for each individual student taking part. These are then tackled through a team approach involving parents and representatives of a number of agencies. The Siege project is a special feature of the very thorough programme for the transition of pupils from their primary schools to the High School and is unique to the school.

67 Most SEN pupils are fully and successfully integrated into the normal pastoral system of tutor groups and years. Many younger pupils benefit from the informal support available at lunch times and breaks in the special needs department. The school has effective working arrangements with all the external providers of help for special needs pupils, medical and therapeutic assistance is provided according to need, specialist careers advice is available and the school is well supported by the local authority.

68 The formal guidance programme is delivered through lessons in PSE and careers. PSE is well planned, with a good handbook and scheme of work. It is taught by specialist staff working in teams for each year group. Policies are in place for sex education and drugs education, with a good module for the former in Year 7. Planning for careers education is similarly careful and comprehensive, and incorporates work experience for students in the summer of Year 10.

2. Partnership with parents and the community

69 Parents are effectively informed about what the school is able to offer through the prospectus and personal contact through primary schools. There is also a detailed Parents' Handbook covering school information and arrangements.

70 Parents are encouraged to participate in children's learning and feel involved. The pupils' diaries provide for day to day parental oversight of work and a means of communication between parent and tutor. Parents are kept well informed of any concerns staff may have. There is a monthly bulletin for matters of general interest. The Friends of Diss High School are active socially and in fundraising.

71 Annual pupils' reports are effective in setting out performance and progress and are supplemented through verbal reports given by staff at annual parents' evenings. Parents or staff can initiate additional reviews at any time if concerned and all reports can be discussed with staff by arrangement. Parents of all pupils on the SEN register are informed and involved through the normal system of reports and parents evenings. Additional parents' evenings dealing with topics such as reading and spelling have proved very popular and are helping parents to support the education of their own children.

72 Annual reviews of statements fully involve parents and other agencies and meet all statutory requirements. The Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for pupils with learning and physical difficulties are also formally reviewed at appropriate intervals. The reviews of IEPs for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are sometimes dealt with in a manner which although effective is not sufficiently formalised.

73 The local community makes good use of the school's facilities. Adult education takes place on site, bringing the community into regular contact and there is good support for school productions, concerts and sporting activities. Visiting speakers and performers from a broad range of agencies and organisations are used within various aspects of the curriculum. Local agencies also provide effective support when needed and relationships are good. Local employers, and some further afield, contribute very effectively to the work experience programme and other careers-related activities within the school. They also contribute through sponsorship and through service as pupil mentors.

74 Educational and exchange visits cover venues locally, further afield within the UK, and into Europe. Charitable activities in aid of local, national and international appeals, together with sporting and other achievements, and school concerts and productions, all further enhance social awareness and involvement within the community, and contribute effectively to pupils' attainment and personal development.

75 The quality of external relations is now seen as good, and confirms the findings at the time of the last report in 1996. The position has been well maintained.

2. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

2. Leadership and management

76 The school is extremely well led and managed. The Headteacher provides dedicated, energetic and intelligent leadership, which contributes considerably to the success enjoyed by the school and its pupils. There is particularly, a solid focus on evaluation of the quality of provision and planning to improve standards and the progress pupils make. The quality of teaching is systematically monitored through direct observation of lessons. Each department meets with the Headteacher termly to review progress and to agree future targets and objectives. These reviews are carefully documented. Departments respond well, incorporating agreed developments into their planning and practice. There is good support for curriculum development through this process.

77 Development planning at departmental and whole school level is directly focused on developments aimed at raising standards and improving pupils' progress. Priorities are clear and there is sound evaluation of the success of earlier plans, particularly through the departmental reviews. The action plan that followed the previous report responded successfully to most of the issues that were raised. Documentation concerned with this and other development is meticulous. There is broad staff support and understanding of priorities and plans. Senior managers, including heads of department and those responsible for pupils' welfare and guidance are effective in the support of teachers and monitoring of the quality of provision in their areas.

78 Governors work successfully with the Headteacher in an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. They discharge their responsibilities effectively, except that statutory responsibilities for daily worship and RE are not fully met. Governors know the school well, support planning and development and offer critical review of suggestions and plans.

79 Within this generally very good picture, provision for RE remains a weakness. The previous report noted the weak provision after Key Stage 3, with too little time allocated to the subject to cover the agreed syllabus in a satisfactory way. This problem remains unresolved and is still a key issue.

80 Senior managers and governors have been very successful in creating a civilised ethos in the school, based on good teaching and clear management. The generally high quality of provision leads to good progress by pupils. Good progress has been made since the previous report except for the development of RE. The planning process is considerably improved and heads of department take responsibility for the quality of provision in their areas. Results in public examinations are considerably improved since the last inspection and GCSE results are improving at a rate faster than the national trend. Good planning and effective leadership provide the basis for continued good improvement.

2. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

81 The school has an appropriate number of well-qualified and experienced teaching staff who are generally well deployed to meet curriculum needs. Non-teaching staff are also highly experienced, make a valuable contribution to the life of the school but are barely sufficient in number with some shortage of time allocated to science.

82 Good provision is made to support the professional development of all teaching and non-teaching staff. There is an effective whole school induction programme for staff new to the school with on-going support for newly qualified teachers through a mentoring system, regular meetings with the induction tutor, observation of lessons and access to LEA in-service courses. Teacher appraisal has been well maintained though in abeyance from September until new national arrangements are clarified. Departmental reviews provide another opportunity to support individual developmental targets set by teachers. Other arrangements for professional development are effected primarily through whole school training days, creative use of teacher non-contact time in the summer term, training opportunities offered by the LEA and, to a lesser extent, other external providers. Though there is identification of whole school and personal need, departmental priorities are not always fully co-ordinated and linked to development plans.

83 Though the school is located on an extensive and well maintained site, the increase in pupil numbers is putting pressure on accommodation, with a shortage of general teaching space and rooms too small for their purpose. This does not yet have a negative impact on standards but results in very heavy room usage with particular problems in meeting the needs of post 16 pupils and accommodating an increasing range of DT courses. Use of the library as a teaching area is inhibited by the need to accommodate sixth form study. Some science laboratories lack essential services, much RE teaching takes place in a dilapidated temporary classroom and much English teaching has to take place isolated from the subject suite. Though new provision has been made for music, this lacks proper sound insulation and use still has to be made of an unsatisfactory temporary classroom. A rolling programme of internal decoration and grounds maintenance contributes to the attractive school environment which is further enhanced by the quality and quantity of display.

84 Though funding for learning resources is well below average, this does not generally affect standards. There are, however, limited facilities for ICT in English, science and art and some shortage of textbooks in modern languages, PE and geography. Resources for RE are inadequate. The library is well organised and managed to provide an attractive environment for learning though only a few subjects make full use of the facilities. Resources within the library are generally adequate though there is a need to continue to replace dated book stock and increase ICT provision. Well-trained pupil librarians support the two very capable library assistants. During the inspection pupils made good use of the facilities at break and lunch times.

85 Since the last inspection, new accommodation has been provided for modern languages and many of the old temporary classrooms have been removed. Some problems still remain with

accommodation for music, RE and the sixth form. A comprehensive health and safety policy and risk assessment procedures have been put into practice. Good management of learning resources continues to support learning though there is some shortage of ICT hardware and of textbooks in some departments.

2.

The efficiency of the school

86 The School Development Plan identifies broad targets for the current year at whole school and departmental levels though the resource implications are not always clear. The forward financial planning process is based upon modelling of both income and expenditure arising from likely changes in roll, curriculum and other variable factors. This effectively identifies any problems ahead so that appropriate measures may be taken. The current year budget is built from these projections. Reserves are used to smooth any variability from year to year. Allocations to subject departments for operating costs are based on experience of previous spending needs, though the school intends to reorganise departmental allocations in the future. School funding is well below the average for secondary schools, and is managed very well to deliver the aims of the school in a changing environment. Income is used very prudently, with priority given to retaining moderate teacher classroom contact and improving the learning environment.

87 The teaching and support staff are very efficiently and effectively deployed. Pupils with SEN are appropriately supported using funds provided by the LEA. Accommodation is well and economically maintained and learning resources are appropriate and largely sufficient. Both are used to exceptionally good effect.

88 Administrative procedures work very well. Financial records are well kept and make the monitoring of expenditure and commitment against budget and the identification of variations by management relatively straightforward. Spending decisions are taken with care. Administrative spending is broadly average compared with similar schools and the service provided is very effective.

89 Taking account of all the factors relating to the context of the school, including the levels of progress and attainment at each key stage, the school provides very good value for money.

90 Standards of financial control and administration have been well maintained since the previous report. Some consideration should nevertheless be given to regular verification of inventories.

2. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

2. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

2. English

91 When pupils enter the school in Year 7 their Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Test results and the data from reading tests carried out at the High School indicate that attainment is broadly average. Observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that progress at Key Stage 3 is good so that by the end of Year 9 attainment in English is above average. When compared with all schools and with similar schools, results in the 1999 National Curriculum Test were well above average and much better than in previous years. Girls did a little better than boys though not by as much as is the case nationally; boys did very much better than boys nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels has also improved.

92 Progress is good at Key Stage 4 and at the end of Year 11 attainment in English in 1998 was significantly above the national average. GCSE results for the last three years are broadly similar. Girls did better than boys although boys did much better than boys nationally. Results in English Literature are slightly above average and the proportion of pupils attaining A* and A is much better than nationally. Results in 1999 were similar to the previous year for both examinations.

93 Performance at A Level in English literature in 1998 was well above the national average: 58% attained the higher grades but 1999 results were disappointing.

94 There were no candidates for drama at GCSE in 1998 but in 1999 a small group were all successful in the A*- G range. At A Level in 1998 90% of pupils obtained a pass in theatre studies. Attainment in drama and in theatre studies has declined since the last inspection.

95 Progress with speaking and listening is good. Most pupils are good listeners. They listen attentively to teachers and to each other and respond appropriately. Confidence develops well as they progress through the school and pupils are able to express opinions and communicate ideas effectively and fluently. Many can sustain ideas without prompting; vocabulary is well developed. They enjoy discussion and good progress is made in co-operative group working skills and in building confidence in answering questions, volunteering ideas and presenting them to the class. In a high attaining set in Year 11 pupils were engaged in lively discussion of a poem by Robert Browning. Some pupils are not very confident when asked to present their ideas in a more formal context. Most pupils read reasonably fluently and encounter little difficulty with the demands of the curriculum. Understanding of a range of writing styles develops well and pupils learn to select quotations from novels or poems to support their ideas. Writing skills are broadly commensurate with reading. Most pupils are quite competent with spelling, punctuation and grammar and make steady progress in these areas over both key stages. Pupils can make good notes and have learnt techniques for planning their work and considering and organising evidence. Higher attaining pupils are able to develop and sustain their ideas well in writing. There is some use of computers to word process work though less than in many schools. Generally work is well presented. Pupils in low attaining sets including those with SEN in Year 7 make good progress as a result of well focused teaching but in subsequent years these pupils make only satisfactory progress with basic skills.

96 Overall progress in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 13 are slightly above the national average. Most pupils are reasonably confident in discussion and make steady progress in lessons with understanding and appreciation of literature. They are able to comment

on the texts they have studied and have developed appropriate skills in the critical analysis of text. In a Year 13 group pupils were discussing and evaluating each other's work to improve understanding of essay structure and style while in Year 12 pupils were making very good progress through lively discussion about the nature of contemporary comedy.

97 Pupils at all levels respond positively in English lessons. Most have very mature attitudes to work. They are lively, keen and interested. They listen very carefully, respond immediately, stay on task and concentrate well even when the pace of lessons is slow. They volunteer opinions, make suggestions and answer questions readily. They work very well together and form very productive working relationships. There are high levels of collaboration and pupils are very supportive of each other. They respond well to challenge and accept responsibility willingly. A few pupils do not listen carefully and quickly become restless.

98 Overall the teaching of English is good and some teaching is excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching of the subject. Teaching is generally based on good knowledge and understanding of the subject and the best lessons have a strong academic base and teachers' enthusiasm for the material is evident. There is some very challenging teaching at all key stages and all levels of attainment and expectations of pupils are mostly pitched appropriately. In two classes in Year 8, for example, teachers' questions were very skilfully focused to extend pupils' understanding of a novel and on the punctuation of dialogue. Low attaining pupils in Year 11 were able to reach a good level of understanding of a speech from Henry V using very carefully selected materials. There is, however, some teaching that does not stretch pupils sufficiently. Planning of lessons is variable in quality. Objectives for each lesson are always clear but not all teachers plan units or programmes of work for the short or medium term. The development of much more rigorous overall schemes of work will provide a very helpful foundation for teaching. Where teaching is strong it provides interesting and varied strategies that stimulate pupils and provide a coherent sequence to lessons. Some teaching, however, often follows the same format and presents a narrow experience for pupils. In some lessons anxiety about control inhibits a more adventurous approach though relationships with pupils are generally very good. Teachers are very supportive of pupils and this works well. Some lessons are very well paced and pupils' interest is sustained but this is not always the case and other lessons are quite slow and too little is expected of students. In these lessons activities take too long to set up and valuable time is lost while pupils merely listen. There is some resistance to giving pupils sufficient responsibility in the classroom. Teaching resources are well used but are variable in quality, in part as a result of the lack of departmental planning. Day to day assessment is used well and good oral feedback is given to pupils. Work is marked regularly though it is not of consistent quality and grading systems are not always understood by pupils. The best marking is detailed, constructive and sets targets for improvement.

99 The department is making an important contribution to the development of the whole school literacy policy. There are some high profile initiatives to promote literacy especially in Key Stage 3. These include private reading time in most lessons and in tutor time. There is a very good library induction programme which is led by the school librarian, an evening to discuss literacy issues for the parents of pupils in Years 7 and 8 and an excellent unit of work which runs in conjunction with primary schools for pupils in Years 6 and 7. Further initiatives to support pupils with weak literacy skills are planned but were not up and running at the time of the inspection.

100 Pupils are taught in broad sets from Year 7 and these arrangements work well especially now that as many pupils as possible are entered for both GCSEs in Key Stage 4. However, the specialist teaching and smaller teaching groups provided in Year 7 for pupils on the SEN register and for those with weak literacy skills are not continued in subsequent years. Although some teaching of low attaining classes is very good, support for these pupils is not satisfactory. There is very little in class support and no programme of withdrawal which systematically targets basic literacy skills. Weaker pupils identified in Year 7 are not retested to check on their progress until Year 10.

101 The department is developing and improving its curriculum planning and is making efforts to address some areas of curriculum entitlement, notably drama and ICT which are currently not well covered. Little improvement has been made in the use of ICT since the last inspection. Departmental planning should identify provision for each year group in such a way as to ensure curriculum continuity and progression and enable much more rigorous monitoring of statutory provision. A start has been made towards building a bank of good quality teaching resources that are linked to curriculum plans. The place of drama as a discrete curriculum subject as well as within the English curriculum has been steadily eroded since the last inspection. Work has been done recently to integrate drama into Key Stage 3 curriculum planning largely through the teaching of Shakespeare in Year 9 but further creative means should be found for the head of drama to enhance provision. Assessment at Key Stage 3 has been developed so that pupils are now given timed assignments each half term, although the department should ensure that its assessments are accurate, particularly in Key Stage 3. Extra-curricular provision is good. The department organises theatre trips, study days and some visits by poets. Opportunities for extra-curricular drama are provided through lunch time and other clubs run by the sixth form. There is an annual school production that involves many pupils in all year groups.

102 The new head of department provides strong and thoughtful leadership. She is providing a clear sense of direction which rests on raising standards of pupils' attainment and recognises the value in building on the strengths of the department whilst offering effective support for the introduction of a considerable programme of change. In a short time she has achieved the respect and commitment of long standing members of the department. Development planning is good and there has been some monitoring of teaching though this requires a more formal structure as well as embedding in departmental practice. The department has systems in place to ensure continued progress.

2. Mathematics

103 Standards of attainment in mathematics for the school as a whole are very good.

104 When pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 overall standards of attainment in mathematics are only average. They make very good progress through Key Stage 3 so that at the end of this key stage attainment is well above average. This is confirmed by the results of national testing in the summer term of Year 9. In 1999 almost four out of every five pupils reached Level 5 or better and more than half of all pupils reached Level 6 or better. This level of performance is well above the national average and broadly in line with the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.

105 In 1999 the performance of boys was better than that of girls. More than four out of every five boys attained Level 5 or better; three out of every four girls did so. Over the previous three years the performance of girls in mathematics was above the national average and broadly in line with performance in English and science. The performance of boys was well above the national average, and was better in mathematics than in English and science. Over the four years 1996 to 1999 results in mathematics showed a strongly rising trend at a faster rate than the national trend.

106 By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have developed considerable facility with the use of the four rules of number. They are familiar with fractions, decimals and percentages and the equivalences between them. They can use a calculator appropriately and accurately for straightforward operations. They are accustomed to the use of letters to represent numbers in algebra, can simplify algebraic expressions and solve simple equations. They can work with measurements in common use, are familiar with a range of shapes in two and three dimensions, with angles and their measurement and with symmetry. They can collect and tabulate data and represent it in appropriate graphical form and

have been introduced to the concept of probability.

107 From this good basis of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils continue to make good progress throughout Key Stage 4, so that at the end of the key stage their overall attainment in mathematics remains very good. This is confirmed by the results of GCSE examinations in the summer term of Year 11. In 1998 more than three out of every five pupils of the school gained a grade in the higher range A*-C. This level of performance is well above the national average. The average grades in mathematics were lower than the average for other subjects in the school by a significantly smaller amount than was nationally the case.

108 In 1996 rather more than half of all pupils gained a grade in the higher range A*-C. In 1997 and 1998 six out of every ten pupils achieved this level of performance. In 1999 almost seven out of ten pupils did so. The performance of pupils of the school over the four year period showed dramatic improvement of almost twenty percentage points, a rising trend far stronger than the national average. In both 1998 and 1999 the performance of girls was better than that of boys. In 1998 this difference was small, but by 1999 had widened to more than three percentage points. In all four years more than nine out of every ten pupils entered for the examination obtained a grade in the full range A*-G, and in 1999 almost all students entered for the examination did so.

109 By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils can solve numerical problems using numbers of any size. They can draw graphs of algebraic functions, can simplify more complex expressions and can solve a variety of equations. They can use trigonometry in association with Pythagoras' Theorem to find the sides and angles of right angled triangles working in two or three dimensions. They can use calculators for an extended range of operations. They can use more sophisticated techniques for the analysis of data and the calculation of probability. They can carry out a detailed mathematical investigation and justify their conclusions.

110 At post 16 pupils have the opportunity to re-take GCSE examinations if they need to do so. Pupils who choose to continue their studies in mathematics have the opportunity to take Mathematics and Further Mathematics at A level. This involves the study of pure mathematics and of applied mathematics, the latter comprising mechanics and statistics. The results of A level examinations have also improved over recent years. In 1996 and 1997 more than seven out of ten pupils gained a pass grade. In 1998 this improved strongly to nine out of every ten, above the national average, and with two thirds of pupils gaining a higher grade in the range A-C. In 1999 performance was less good, dropping back to eight out of ten pupils passing, still a significant improvement on the earlier years.

111 Mathematics is an important tool in the study of a number of other subjects, and these in turn contribute to pupils' experience and progress in mathematics. In science mathematical skills are generally above average, with good graphical skills and skills of measurement. In history structured work in relation to population statistics leads to good graphs. In geography pupils' knowledge of statistics is satisfactory, but the range of applications is relatively narrow. In ICT pupils are very good with control, with working with sequences of commands and with programming post 16. In GCSE business studies numerical skills are well used to solve complex problems. In textiles pupils show good skills of measurement and use patterns well.

112 In part the very good progress made by pupils is due to their own positive attitudes to their learning. Behaviour was very good in all the lessons seen. Pupils listen well to their teachers and pay attention to the work on the board. They respond to direct questions politely and usually accurately. They are willing to explain their thinking at greater length and to demonstrate on the board when they are given the opportunity to do so. Relationships between pupils are good and they co-operate well with each other for paired and group work. They have good habits of independent study, apply themselves well to the examples set for them and sustain concentration for the duration of the time allowed. They take care with drawing and handwriting and the presentation of their work is generally good.

113 Teachers' subject knowledge is more than adequate to the work they are required to teach. At A level this is very good, and for the demanding courses in A level Further Mathematics very good indeed. All have generally good classroom skills - their exposition and board work are clear and accurate, they have good skills of questioning and for supporting pupils as they work. Planning throughout the scheme of work is very good indeed. The subject material is arranged in blocks lasting approximately half a term, with a formal test at the end of each block in the Autumn and Spring terms and an examination in the summer term. There is very good emphasis on attainment targets 2 and 3 so that skills in arithmetic, algebra and geometry are developed and consolidated at an early stage. As pupils progress through the school good organisation permits them to extend their studies to the level of exceptional performance well before GCSE examinations so that the content needed for the higher grades is familiar and ready for use in practice papers later. Opportunities are kept open for as many pupils as possible to be entered for the examination at the higher and intermediate tiers, so optimising their grades and extending their mathematical knowledge. All these measures help to enable the high expectations teachers have of their pupils to be realised.

114 Teachers' management of their pupils is very good. In most classes the ethos for learning is excellent. Teachers know their pupils well and do their best to meet their needs. Homework is set in accordance with school policy. There are sensible and appropriate procedures for marking, though still some variation in standards between individual teachers' use of the grading system and the perception and helpfulness of comments. Pupils with SEN receive appropriate help and support and make good progress. The best lessons seen were characterised by careful planning for the structured development of mathematical reasoning, with good variety of activity and no undue dependence on the textbook in lesson time. Good use was made of mental strategies in some lessons, and of computers, practical work and games in others.

115 The department is well managed. A limited number of priorities is set for development but these are well focused on raising standards. Relationships in the department are good and there is a positive learning ethos. Overall, in order to maintain the excellent progress over the four years since the last inspection, further attention should be given to a number of issues: public examination requests are not analysed by gender; there is too little use of investigative approaches to new learning; ICT is insufficiently used and pupils have too few opportunities to speak at length about their work or to demonstrate to the class.

2.

Science

116 The great majority of pupils make good progress and attain standards that are above average at the end of each key stage. The results obtained in the 1999 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds significantly improved on those of 1998, were well above the national averages and were in line with the average of those schools having similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. Teacher assessments were below the test results for level 5 and above and similar for level 6 and above. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The 1998 GCSE results in

double science were well above average with the proportion gaining the highest grade at twice the national average. The proportion gaining A*- C grades was well above average for all 15 year olds and well above that of schools with pupils who had similar attainment levels two years previously. Boys and girls performed similarly and made significantly better progress in science, in comparison with national norms, than in their other subjects. The small number of pupils taking single science all obtained at least a grade G as did two thirds of those taking rural science. In 1999 results were similar in double science and improved in single science and rural science. The 1998 A level results were well above average in biology and social biology and a little above in chemistry and physics. In 1999 results improved in physics, were similar in social biology and not as high in biology and chemistry. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have improved as a result of a number of changes that have taken place. One third of the science teachers have been appointed in the last three years; a new scheme of work was introduced when the 1999 Year 9 entered the school and a comprehensive revision programme including lunchtime sessions took place for them this year. Additionally, the assessment information obtained is being used to target individuals and groups for improvement.

117 Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in science which are average. By the end of Year 9 they are significantly above and pupils have acquired a good knowledge and secure understanding of the subject matter in each of the attainment targets. Their practical skills also develop to above expected levels. Year 7 pupils learn the essentials of good laboratory practice, how to observe and measure accurately and to record appropriately. They can plan experiments ensuring that tests are carried out fairly and make sensible predictions of outcomes. Higher attainers in Year 9 use the particle model of matter to explain changes of state and lower attainers describe how simple mixtures may be separated. A group of Year 9 pupils carefully and safely carried out experiments, co-operating well with one another and in the process acquired a sound understanding of photosynthesis. ICT skills are above average and lower attaining Year 9 pupils competently access the Internet to obtain relevant information. There is, however, insufficient equipment to provide opportunities for hands on development of data capture and logging skills. Most Year 9 pupils identify and describe functions and parts of the eye and explain how planetary movements determine the length of days and years. Good progress continues through Key Stage 4 and Year 11 pupils quickly grasp the concept of pressure in liquids and applications in hydraulics. The number of pupils taking rural science has increased and they are enjoying the course. In one lesson they quickly learned about modern egg production and if this rate of progress is sustained performance at GCSE should improve even more next year. Higher attainers in Year 11 competently interpret speed-time graphs and calculate accelerations and most predict metal reactions and write equations using the reactivity series. Their interpretational and evaluation skills develop to above expected levels. A group of lower attainers developed their observation skills when observing chemical reactions and they described features of different types of cells. Post 16 human biology pupils improved their examination techniques in a lesson and skilfully carried out a dissection in another. Those studying biology used a program from the Internet to consolidate their understanding of inheritance in genetics. By the end of a lesson Year 13 physics pupils understood the behaviour of particles in electric and magnetic fields and applications in the mass spectrometer. Chemistry pupils understand reaction mechanisms and calculate rate constants. In one lesson Year 12 pupils measured and calculated molecular masses of volatile liquids. Good teaching, appropriate grouping arrangements, provision of suitable tasks and effective in-class support in some lessons ensure that pupils with SEN make the same progress as others. In one lesson however with the large number of lower attainers and pupils with SEN the teacher and support assistant were unable to respond immediately to those needing individual attention. Pupils have the numerical skills to enable them to process their experimental results. Graphical work is of a high standard.

118 Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They arrive promptly and well prepared for lessons and settle quickly. They are interested, concentrate well and willingly respond and put forward ideas. They handle equipment carefully and show respect for property and each other's work. In group work they cooperate very well working safely and productively without constant close supervision. Their attitudes to homework are good and on many occasions they spend more than the expected time completing the tasks.

119 Teaching is always at least satisfactory. It is good or better in nearly 90 per cent of lessons and very good in almost half. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers know their subject well and make it comprehensible to pupils of all levels of attainment. They know pupils extremely well and most use this knowledge to question pupils skilfully, make them think and apply, check understanding and draw out information. In a few lessons, however, there is not enough use of these strategies, particularly when individuals need to be focused. Teachers have high expectations of and stress the importance of accuracy, correct terminology and presentation. Lessons are well planned, often with variety of activity, and the pace is usually appropriate. However, with some modification of strategy a group of higher attainers could have covered more in the lesson and occasional note copying from the board could be made more challenging. A good range of strategies is generally used. Demonstrations are carried out competently and practical work is organised safely and in good order. Most teachers adopt a lively and enthusiastic approach using praise, encouragement and humour to best effect. Class management is usually good and frequently very good and pupils are kept on task. Homeworks are purposeful tasks and marking is often accompanied by informative comments that help pupils to move forward. In a very well taught lesson on acid rain, the greenhouse effect and deforestation there was lively and clear exposition by the teacher who skilfully obtained and developed pupils' ideas. Concepts were clarified and the impact of science on society both presently and in the past was discussed. Pupils were then fully engaged in researching and extracting relevant information from a wide range of sources with much extra guidance given to individuals. The very well planned lesson had continued appropriately from the previous one and was conducted at a brisk pace and the objectives were achieved.

120 The curriculum is planned well and excellent liaison with feeder schools ensures very good continuity, easing the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. A redistribution of the teaching periods so that Year 9 have six periods a week instead of Year 7 would provide more time in the lead up to the National Curriculum tests in early summer and minimise the number of groups split between two teachers in Year 7. There are potential difficulties with the large Year 12 group in physics particularly when practical work has to be assessed. Assessment procedures are good and much use is being made of the information obtained. Teachers are well qualified and are deployed effectively making good use of specialisms and expertise with particular groups. Teachers appointed since the last inspection are bringing in new ideas and approaches. Technical support is of high quality but there is too little and too much reliance on good will and self help. Leadership is strong with the departmental head well supported by two subject heads who provide clear direction and commitment to high standards and continuous improvement. There is sufficient accommodation and it is in good condition. Some laboratories do not have main services on central benches, which results in cramped conditions when large groups do practical work. The department is adequately resourced overall, though there are insufficient computers available for data capture and logging. The department has responded very well to the issues highlighted in the previous inspection report and is in a strong position to sustain improvement.

2. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

2. Art

121 Overall, standards of attainment in art are high. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. They make very good progress and, by the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of a significant majority is well above national expectations. By the end of Year 9, pupils have developed sound observational skills and use a range of tools and materials appropriately and well. They demonstrate a good understanding of the elements of design, as for example in one Year 7 lesson observed where

colour was sensitively applied to express mood and in Year 8 where there was extensive exploration of pattern through both painting and print. Imaginative skills are strong and pupils make good use of their knowledge and understanding of artists and art movements to inform and enrich their own work, as in the development of portraiture in Year 9 stimulated by the contrasting styles of Picasso and Andy Warhol. Consistent progress is made in all lessons with a notable improvement in classwork and sketchbooks over time.

122 Pupils continue to make good progress at Key Stage 4. As a result, attainment at the end of the key stage is very good with the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 1998 significantly above the national average. The results achieved by boys are particularly noteworthy with attainment broadly similar to that of girls. Results in 1999 indicate a further improvement in standards. Over the key stage there is very good consolidation and development of knowledge, understanding and practical skills with the majority of pupils able to research and develop extensive preparatory studies for each of their coursework projects. Final studies are well executed and show an increasing personal response to set projects. Much of the presentation is of a high standard. At both key stages, pupils with SEN make good progress through provision of broadly based tasks which enable all pupils to work at an individual level.

123 Standards of attainment post 16 are also well above average. The number of pupils obtaining the higher grades A-B in the GCE A level course in 1998 was well above average. Though the proportion of A-B grades was slightly lower in 1999, all pupils gained a grade A-C with an increase in the average points score per pupil from the previous year. The progress made at this stage is impressive, with increasing confidence and maturity in the work produced. The quality of drawing and painting developed through first hand observation of the figure from life drawing sessions and the way this is used to inform further studies is outstanding. Pupils show the ability to explore topics in depth, as for instance in the work developed from a residential visit to the Yorkshire Dales and demonstrate an increasingly individual approach to common starting points. Critical studies are well applied to their own work and the quality and presentation of personal studies produced at the end of the course are high.

124 The subject makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Most show an enjoyment of art, are highly motivated and stay on task in lessons. Behaviour is very good and pupils respond positively to well structured and often rigorous teaching. Materials and equipment are used sensibly and safely. Relationships are good, there is a high level of respect for the ideas and work of others and a sense of responsibility for their own work as pupils mature.

125 Teaching is very good. The commitment shown by pupils and the quality of the work achieved indicates a high standard of teaching overall, particularly at Key Stage 3 and at post 16. All art teachers have a very good command of the subject and high expectations both of working practice and the standards to be achieved, which they communicate very effectively to pupils. Lessons and course content are very well planned and good use is made of a range of teaching strategies. The most effective lessons are characterised by a review of progress and clear definition of tasks to establish interest and maintain pace. Teacher demonstration is well used in many lessons to extend learning as for instance in Year 8 where pupils worked with care and understanding following the teacher's presentation of lino printing. Good knowledge of pupil progress is well focused to provide individual support in lessons and constructive comments on homework.

126 Curriculum content is well structured to support progression and continuity of experience particularly in drawing, painting and printmaking. A particular strength lies in the consistent emphasis on critical studies to inform all practical work though care should be taken that this aspect does not become too dominant. ICT is well used to extend two-dimensional work but, with limited hardware, is not yet fully developed. At all stages, pupils have the opportunity to work with three-dimensional

materials though this could usefully be extended along with opportunities to work from the environment. The subject makes a very strong contribution to all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the ethos developed within the department and the encouragement given to pupils of all ages to reflect on their own and others' values and beliefs. Course content provides consistent opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures and to consider moral and social issues as for instance in a topic on 'Siege' in Year 7 with practical work based on Picasso's Guernica. The formal curriculum is well supported by extra-curricular activities including gallery visits, after school sessions and the residential visit for post 16 pupils.

127 Thorough procedures are in place for assessing and recording attainment which are well used to inform curriculum planning particularly through the comprehensive records maintained of all work covered at Key Stage 3. This provides an excellent base for departmental evaluation and review.

128 The department enjoys very strong leadership through an effective collaborative style which encourages active participation by all staff in decision making and good liaison on shared post 16 teaching groups. Procedures to monitor and support teaching and curriculum development are very effective. Documentation is thorough and appropriate targets are identified for further improvement. The department is well staffed other than in classroom support for pupils with SEN. Accommodation is appropriate and well equipped though a little shabby in part and limited in space for private study by the increasing number of post 16 pupils. Very good use is made of display in the department and to enrich the environment around the school. The department is adequately resourced for most practical work but has insufficient equipment for ICT.

129 This is a very good department, which has improved on the high standards noted at the time of the last inspection.

2.

Business Studies

130 The business studies department teaches GCSE and A level business studies and contributes most of the teaching time allocated to Advanced and Intermediate GNVQ business and leisure and tourism courses. The GNVQ co-ordinator is a member of the department and works closely with the head of business studies. Responsibilities are carefully delegated and accountability is defined and accepted. It is an effective and sensitively operated system, based upon a common acceptance of curriculum principles and objectives.

131 Teaching is good. Sometimes it is very good. Tutors use their expert knowledge to give up to date examples drawn from the business world. Lesson planning is very effective. There is usually a good balance between teacher explanation and pupil activities. In post 16 lessons, management games are used to demonstrate the range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills that influence teamwork in the work place. Pupils enjoy this and learn a great deal from the experience. Teachers demonstrate their high expectations through the nature of some of the classroom and homework tasks. A GCSE group coped very well with a business location costing exercise that would have challenged many post 16 pupils. General questioning techniques are effective but judicious use of targeted questions would encourage more pupils explain their views to others. Most, but not all, staff make good use of the board to summarise the main points, establishing a framework for pupil notes, ensuring clear identification of technical terms. All the features of good teaching are in place. Increased use of pupil presentations, particularly post 16, would provide further opportunities for pupils to explain what they have found out, encourage fuller pupil participation and stimulate class discussion.

132 Teachers benefit from the good working atmosphere developed in the department and in the school. Pupils are well behaved, co-operative, listen carefully and usually do what they are asked to do. They appreciate that their work is carefully marked and understand how well they are doing. They recognise and value the respect shown them by teachers and respond well.

133 Although subject content is totally new, most pupils make satisfactory or good progress throughout Key Stage 4. They are closely involved in the learning process. Most use technical terms appropriately. By the end of the key stage, the highest attainers are presenting their research projects in a concise business format using graphs and charts to support their views. Pupils learn to read balance sheets and some become adept at interpreting the health of a business through appropriate use of ratio analysis. SEN pupils are helped considerably by class teachers and often by other pupils. There are some work sheets designed to meet their learning needs. These pupils make effective progress and most achieve certification in the GCSE examination.

134 Progress is generally good in the A level course. Many pupils start the course without having studied the subject at GCSE. Throughout the programme, they learn to handle the complexities and implications of supply and demand. They understand that there are many other internal and external constraints that have to be considered when taking business decisions, particularly in the realm of manpower planning. The best pieces of examination coursework showed a growing understanding of business concepts and a developing ability to apply what they had learned when writing reports following investigation of particular businesses. GNVQ portfolios tell a similar story. There is evidence of well-developed research skills, good management of information producing focused conclusions.

135 Attainment in the GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 has fluctuated considerably over the last four years but has always remained above average when compared with national statistics. Standards in current course-work and responses in lessons largely confirm this. In 1998, attainment was well above average. Ten pupils gained the highest A*/A grades with 90% of candidates securing the higher A*-C grades. In 1999 this proportion fell sharply and is much closer to the national average. Only one pupil reached grade A attainment although all candidates secured certification. This fluctuation reflects the changing balance of capability within the groups opting for the subject.

136 Attainment in A level business studies is broadly in line with the national average. In 1997 and 1998 candidates secured an above average points score but this fell back in 1999. Nevertheless, the school has the very creditable record of an A level pass rate which is close to 100%, consistently above the national figure for four years. Advanced GNVQ business and leisure and tourism courses started in 1998 and completion is due in July 2000.

137 There was no specific report on business in the previous report but the picture is one of development, building on existing strengths. The range of courses has expanded and pupils continue to be attracted to the programmes on offer. The range of resources is limited but of good quality. There are not enough textbooks for A level pupils to have their own copy. This can restrict advance preparation for lesson activities. The department has very effective leadership, teamwork is highly valued, expertise and resources are used to good effect. Formal development planning conforms to the school model but should be longer term with specified training targets.

2.

Classics

138 Classical Studies are taught to all pupils in Year 8 in one seventy-minute period per week as a

freestanding one-year course. In Year 9 about 60 pupils are given the choice of learning either Latin or one of French or German. This year 31 pupils chose to study Latin.

139 At the end of Year 9 pupils taking Latin may opt to continue it to GCSE. Pupils may also choose to do classical civilisation in two years to GCSE. Currently there is one classical civilisation group of 10 pupils in Year 11 and a very small Latin group, also in Year 11, doing GCSE as a twilight course. Pupils may also choose to do classical civilisation at A Level and there is a group of 9 in the present Year 13.

140 Attainment is high at all levels. Year 9 Latin pupils, after only nine weeks of Latin, recognise the distinction between two past tenses and can already translate elementary Latin into English. Higher attainers deduce the meaning of words from context and are beginning to see the connections between English words and their Latin roots. Latin results at GCSE have been very high: in 1998 92% achieved A*-C grades. Year 11 classical civilisation pupils have good recall of texts studied in the past and apply this knowledge well to new texts. Post 16 pupils have good understanding of the subtleties and conventions of Greek theatre. A level classical civilisation results in 1998 were very high with all five pupils obtaining A, B or C grades.

141 Teaching is very strong at all levels. Expectations are high: the pace of work is brisk but thorough; homework given is demanding; pupils are kept busy and involved. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. Use of method is strong: drama and small group work stimulate understanding and appreciation of difficult text. Very strong classroom management ensures complete attention and exemplary behaviour.

2. Design and Technology

142 At the end of Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are good and above the national average. Teacher assessment shows that a majority of pupils achieve Level 5 or above. Girls significantly outperform boys. The foundation course provides a solid base of knowledge, skills and understanding across the whole design and technology curriculum. Pupils are introduced to specific making skills through focused practical tasks, as demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson where pupils design and build a personalised coat hook. They learn the basic skills of designing a shape, marking and cutting out their design. In food technology pupils test basic ingredients to understand what happens when they are subjected to heat: for example, that egg whites react differently from egg yolks, and that once altered most ingredients cannot return to their original form. Electronic skills are well established and Year 8 students understand how sensors work and how different types react to light, sound, temperature and a switch. Pupils' folders are well presented and show them to be capable of planning a task through a stage by stage process. There is good and appropriate use of ICT by all pupils. The quality and breadth of attainment have improved since the previous inspection when standards were judged to be satisfactory.

143 At Key Stage 4 the great majority of pupils achieve standards of attainment above the national average. This is demonstrated by the high standards achieved in GCSE food technology, child development, graphic products and textiles, where results are above the national average. Results are below the national average in resistant materials, although in the classes observed attainment was average. Design portfolios show well-developed research skills and good use of the design process. This was observed in Year 10 graphics products, where pupils' portfolios show a good use of desktop publishing and computer graphics. The skills learned in graphic products during Key Stage 3 have a marked effect on all DT portfolio work. There is good use of ICT, as, for example, in child

development where pupils accessed information from the ROSPA website and researched accidents involving children. Standards of attainment by all pupils, including those with SEN, have improved since the previous inspection when they were satisfactory.

144 At post 16 standards of attainment in home economics and design and technology are mainly good. A Level results overall are in line with the national average, but slightly below in the higher grades A-B. Students are provided with a broad range of options and the quality of some individual products is high. These vary from environmental projects, such as the design of an ornamental garden, to an architectural project for a small sports stadium. In home economics pupils show a good command of the subject; they have, for example, a sound understanding of the development of the health service. Pupils follow a process involving research and investigation before developing and making their final products.

145 Pupils in all key stages make good progress. They quickly gain new knowledge and skills. Homework is regularly set and plays an integral part in pupils' learning; the homework pack for Key Stage 3 is well considered and instrumental in providing continuity of learning. Pupils develop good independent learning techniques and most can apply these to good effect in their work. Industrial techniques are studied in all design and technology disciplines. A Level projects, for example, are linked to the needs of local industries. The application of research skills and techniques makes a major contribution to the progress pupils make. SEN pupils make very good progress. They have substantial individual support and teachers negotiate specific targets directly with the pupil. DT teachers contribute to pupils' IEP's. There has been good improvement since the last inspection when progress was sound.

146 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in all classes. They develop maturity and confidence as they progress through each of the key stages. By the latter stages of Key Stage 4, most pupils work independently on the projects and tasks set them. There is a concern for social issues and many projects and tasks are based upon social needs. They are articulate and able to express themselves clearly. The majority interact well with each other and with their teachers. They are patient and listen to other points of view. Behaviour is good within all classes.

147 The quality of teaching is very good throughout the department. Teachers use their specialist knowledge and skills to match pupils' needs. There is positive interaction during lessons, ideas are discussed and solutions are considered. Teachers' expectations are high and good teaching makes a positive contribution to the good attainment achieved by pupils. They teach with enthusiasm. Schemes of work are broad and interesting; teachers set clear objectives and ensure pupils build upon previous skills and understanding in their work. Links with ICT are particularly strong and there is relevant application of ICT skills at all stages. Assessment procedures are in place and play an important role in improving learning. Pupils are involved in self-evaluation procedures on the completion of all projects and tasks. Two well-qualified technicians ably support the department. Teaching quality has improved since the last report.

148 Strong leadership supports the department. The DT coordinator and the head of home economics work well together and manage their areas of responsibility efficiently. They make full use of the expertise of departmental staff and the new A level examination includes staff from across both areas. Accommodation is appropriate and well proportioned. Learning resources, including ICT provision, are appropriate to the needs of the department. The department has the potential to continue the good improvement made since the last inspection.

Geography

149 Pupils' levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and post 16 are in line with the national expectation. At Key Stage 4 attainment is above average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3, results showed pupils achieving levels well above the national average. In 1998, GCSE results were above the national average with boys and girls achieving similar grades. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. In 1999 pupils achieved similar results, but there was a decline in grades at the highest levels. The GCE A level results were in line with the national average, which is below that achieved at the time of the previous inspection. The department reviews the results and has implemented strategies for raising attainment.

150 Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of what places are like and how landscapes are formed. They have a good knowledge of different environments, particularly at Key Stage 4, and the relationship between people and the environment in which they live. They have a satisfactory understanding of basic terms and concepts, using them effectively to explain geographical patterns. One group of pupils in Year 7, for example, used the idea of hierarchy to study villages and towns in the local area. Higher attaining pupils have a good background knowledge to bring to lessons, and generally know where places are.

151 All pupils have a good understanding of the methods of geographical enquiry, collecting data, interpreting the results and drawing conclusions. They have good skills in collecting information from a range of resource materials such as atlases, textbooks, and information technology. Written answers are generally of sound quality, and extended written work of the higher attaining students is fluent and shows good use of geographical terms. Pupils have good oral skills. In one lesson, pupils in Year 13 were confidently and fluently discussing links between the production of energy and its effects on the environment, making good use of their knowledge of the topic and geographical terms. Numerical skills are sound, but the range of techniques used in Key Stages 3 and 4 is narrow.

152 Pupils' progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and post16, and good at Key Stage 4. Sound progress is made in gaining knowledge and understanding because of teachers' clear and careful explanations, a brisk pace, sound lesson structure, and the hard work of pupils. In one lesson in Year 11, for example, pupils worked hard to study features of development in a range of countries and were making good progress. The lesson started with a brisk introduction drawing on previous work and continued with a clear explanation of geographical terms, paired work to identify countries at different stages of development, placing these countries on a world map, and an introduction to a research exercise to investigate two contrasting countries in depth. Progress in understanding is slower where work lacks challenge, pupils copy work, and there is no opportunity for pupils to consolidate their learning by using it in a new context. Sound progress is made in gaining an understanding of geographical terms especially when they are carefully explained and used regularly by teachers. The progress of pupils with SEN in gaining basic knowledge is good when work is closely matched to their needs.

153 Pupils have a good attitude to the subject. They listen very carefully and are attentive, well motivated, interested, and well behaved. The majority are keen to be involved in the lesson. They work hard, maintain their exercise books in good order, and generally present work with care. Pupils work well in groups and listen respectfully to the views of others. They are able to maintain concentration and persevere with extended pieces of work. Post 16 students have a positive and mature approach to the subject.

154 The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and post 16 and is good at Key Stage 4. Lessons are well prepared, organised, and are carefully planned. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to provide clear explanations and a clear focus for the lessons. Teaching is less effective, particularly at Key Stage 3, when questioning lacks rigour, and exercises such as copying of writing or

drawing lack challenge and do not allow pupils to use or apply their learning to a new context to develop understanding. Work is generally pitched at an appropriate level as, for example, when worksheet materials were closely matched to the needs of a lower attaining group of pupils in Year 7, which enabled them to gain a clear basic understanding of the pattern of land use in a town. Relationships in the classroom are good and lessons have a purposeful working atmosphere. Exercise books are generally marked up to date but the quality and completeness of the notes made by pupils at Key Stage 4 and post 16 are not checked.

155 The curriculum meets national requirements. The teaching scheme at Key Stages 3 and 4 lacks a clear indication of progression of learning, and there is no scheme for A level teaching. A strength of the curriculum is the well developed fieldwork programme which provides good support for GCSE coursework and A Level individual study. The use of ICT is being developed but is yet to be systematically integrated into the scheme of work. The system of assessment is good but the lack of a systematic record of results hampers its effective use for guiding pupils and for curriculum planning.

156 Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The department responded effectively to the previous report and is in a good position to make still further improvement. Learning resources are barely adequate. Those purchased are of good quality but the range of books in class sets is narrow. The lack of the required quantity of basic textbooks for GCSE and A level work results in pupils being asked to purchase books. Accommodation is satisfactory and teachers and pupils have enhanced the environment with good displays of work.

2.

History

157 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils have good knowledge of the periods studied, understand the importance and use of historical sources and are able to draw information from sources to present interesting and accurate written work. Lower attaining pupils in this key stage find difficulty with the technical terms used in history and are not always able to apply their knowledge effectively in written exercises. The attainment of pupils in one Year 7 group observed was above average in knowledge of the period, recall of learning from previous lessons and the ability to describe important events. Standards of attainment on entry are average. Good teaching and a positive ethos enable many pupils at this key stage to achieve above average levels of attainment by the end of Year 9.

158 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is average. Performance in the GCSE examination in the past three years has matched the national average for A*-C grades. Girls have performed better than boys, performance by boys being more variable, though on occasion above average. The percentage of girls gaining A* - C grades in the most recent examination was well above the national average for girls. Pupils are generally secure in their knowledge of the issues studied, are able to use several sources of historical information and understand how a number of factors relate together to explain historical events and movements.

159 The attainment of pupils post 16 is above average and has shown steady improvement over recent years. In 1998 the average points score for all pupils was in line with the national average, that for girls being well above average. Pupils can put their knowledge of the period studied into a broad context of historical understanding and can explain their views with confidence and clarity. Written work in Year 12 is above average for this early stage of the course. These students have a firm grasp of the issue studied and are able to use relevant material from the sources studied to express opinions and judgements.

160 The progress of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and at post 16 is good and is particularly so in Years 7 and 9. Progress throughout Key Stage 3 enables pupils to develop skills of historical enquiry and to apply these effectively to visual and documentary sources. Lower attaining pupils in this key stage make satisfactory progress when their learning is structured and supported by suitable learning aids. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4 in using historical sources, in study skills and in presentation of ideas and points of view. Progress is maintained post 16, students making good progress in knowledge and in interpretative skills through consideration of the differing views of historians on the issues they are studying.

161 The positive attitude to the subject by the great majority of pupils is indicated by the increased numbers opting for the subject at GCSE and that seven of last year's A level students have gone on to read history at university. The response of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and post 16 is good. They are well-behaved, work with concentration and effort and relate well to each other. Many pupils willingly express their views with confidence and join in activities enthusiastically, though class discussion post 16 is limited.

162 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good. Lessons are well organised and expectations of pupils clearly stated. Classroom management is good and promotes purposeful learning. Very good teaching was observed in a Year 9 lesson on the Treaty of Versailles in which clear explanation of difficult ideas, well-organised group work and clearly structured tasks sustained purposeful learning throughout the lesson. Adapted materials are used to help the learning of lower attaining pupils but these lack focus on the particular, individual needs of such pupils and are not always used effectively with pupils who have difficulty with historical terminology and concepts. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use direct tuition, questions and group-work effectively to advance pupils' learning. At post 16 the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good command of their subject and plan their lessons with care, relating well to their pupils in an atmosphere of encouragement and support. Opportunities to encourage pupils to debate issues with each other however, rather than direct response to the teacher, are not developed.

163 The curriculum for history meets statutory requirements and issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed so that the schemes of work now cover all elements of the National Curriculum for history. Planning for the learning of lower attaining pupils has taken place in response to the last inspection, but support materials used do not focus sufficiently clearly upon the specific needs of such pupils, especially in the use of language and concepts and the pupils' personal spelling book is under-used as a support for this aspect of their learning. Improvements have been made in reports since the last inspection. Pupils' work is assessed on a regular basis but there is inconsistency in the standard of marking across the department, especially in setting clear goals for pupils future learning. Self-assessment by pupils is at an early stage of development; pupils would benefit from this being more quickly and consistently applied across all groups, especially in Key Stage 3.

164 A committed and enthusiastic teacher gives sound leadership to the subject. There is good morale and commitment among all teachers of history, promoting an ethos that supports learning. Accommodation is good and extensive display of pupils' work in classrooms and adjacent corridors creates a stimulating environment for learning. Resources are adequate and improvements have been made in the range of textbooks since the last inspection. Some use is made of ICT, though the language level of some CD ROM material is unsuited to the full attainment range. A well-planned study guide teaches pupils how to access resources in the department and the school library.

165 Improvements have been made since the last inspection. The department needs to ensure that support material used with lower attaining pupils is more carefully targeted to their needs; that assessment, especially target-setting for pupils, is consistently applied across the department; that IT

learning materials are accessible to pupils of all ability levels. This is a good department making a significant contribution to pupils' development.

2.

Information and Communication Technology

166 On entry to the school pupils' skills in ICT are broadly average. They are confident in keyboard and mouse control and have a sound understanding of word processing, desktop publishing and other basic applications. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are good and above the national average. The greater majority of pupils achieve the National Curriculum level 5 or above. Girls perform better than boys, although the difference in performance is not great. The ICT 'single skills' course has been carefully constructed and fully meets the needs of Key Stage 3 pupils. It provides a broad range of experiences in the necessary strands and applications of ICT. Examples of new learning were observed in Year 7 where pupils were introduced to the basic commands necessary to program the movements of a turtle using 'logo' software. In Year 8 pupils learn the functions of sensors that are activated by variations in light, temperature, movement and through switches. They understand the use of logic gates and are able to compare their own experiments to applications in industrial and home use, for example, in surveillance systems. The previous report found that cross-curricular applications in ICT were weak. This criticism has been fully addressed and on completion of the course pupils have gained the experience of learning new skills and are able to apply them across the major subject areas of the school curriculum. There are particular strengths in mathematics and DT, where departments have their own computer resources. ICT is also used effectively in modern foreign languages for word processing and desktop processing and in geography for word processing and the construction of graphs and charts.

167 Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 are very good and well above the national average. Pupils are provided with a discrete ICT course in both Years 10 and 11. The course includes a range of skills and applications to extend their knowledge of ICT in both school and industry. This was observed in Year 11, where pupils are introduced to video editing techniques. They construct a storyboard sequence in a composition of images and sounds. The lack of regular cross-curricular application in Key Stage 4 reported at the last inspection has been fully resolved. Delivery across the school curriculum is now strong and all pupils are confident in their approach and set high standards for themselves. Good use is made of ICT in conjunction with GCSE coursework and there is regular use of Internet search facilities for research in most subjects. Desktop publishing is effectively used, as are graphic applications. Where pupils produce project folders they use a combination of graphics and fonts in the presentation of their work. Statutory requirements are fully met.

168 At post 16, standards of attainment are very good. A level results are above the national average with a good proportion of pupils achieving the higher A-B grades. The course provides an opportunity for pupils to develop specific ICT applications, as in Year 13, where pupils demonstrated their programming capability using the 6502 processor. GNVQ courses contain a major element of ICT application. Students taking these courses are confident in the use of ICT and competent in the application of word-processing, constructing databases and using graphics and research through the Internet.

169 Very good progress is achieved at all stages - an improvement since the last inspection. There is consistent monitoring of pupil progress and effective target setting, promoting good all round progress. At Key Stage 3, records of pupil progress are kept by subject teachers and passed to the coordinator to be incorporated into National Curriculum levels. There is evidence of strong learning taking place in ICT lessons and a majority of pupils demonstrate the ability to investigate and solve problems when they arise. In Year 10, for example, pupils use databases and spreadsheets to simulate a work plan for telephone engineers. There is good pace and time and resources are well used in all ICT

classes. SEN pupils are provided with one-to-one support and, when necessary, specifically designed learning programmes are used to good effect. SEN pupils are confident in the use of ICT and make very good progress.

170 Pupils' attitudes towards ICT throughout all key stages and subjects are very good. They collaborate well when working in groups and are co-operative at all times when working in the ICT bases. ICT is a popular subject within the school and relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent. There is open access to computers and pupils respond well to the trust placed in them.

171 The quality of teaching within the ICT department is mainly very good and on occasions exceptional. Teachers' subject knowledge is high and strategies for learning are well considered. The ICT co-ordinator provides strong leadership and there is a pleasant and co-operative working atmosphere within the main computer rooms. The quality of teaching within the department has improved since the last inspection, when it was sound. All lessons observed had good pace and teachers employ a range of teaching strategies, including group and paired learning. Pupils enjoy the challenges and opportunities provided for them through imaginative schemes of work. SEN pupils are provided with individual support, encouragement and appropriate tasks. A majority of teachers regularly use ICT and all departments include ICT within their schemes of work, though not always consistently. The last report identified the need for further support for subject teachers who lacked confidence in making full use of ICT in their programmes of work. This has improved, although a small minority of subject teachers are still reluctant to make use of the very good resources available to them.

172 Computer provision throughout the school is good and broadly in line with the national average. Computer suites are conveniently sited around the school and are accessible to all departments. All networked computers are new, sufficiently powerful and provide an excellent resource. There is a wide and appropriate range of software programmes that meet the majority of curriculum needs, including Internet and e-mail provision, though there are inadequate datalogging facilities in science. The department has addressed all of the issues raised during the previous inspection, including the key issue relating to cross-curricular provision. The department has the potential to continue to improve.

2. Modern Foreign Languages

173 Attainment in French and German by the end of Key Stage 3 is better than expectations. In most lessons pupils understand and react well to the teacher's instructions in the foreign language. They have good comprehension of native speakers on tape, especially where teachers prepare this carefully and follow it up appropriately. Pupils who are spoken to consistently in the foreign language are themselves competent at speaking the language using prelearnt phrases. Many have acceptable accent and pronunciation and higher attainers can adapt language successfully to form new sentences. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils with only eight weeks of German understood the difficult accusative case and could use it accurately when saying what they had bought in shops. Pupils of middle and lower attainment are also reaching standards that are well in line with expectations. A group of such pupils used the past tense confidently in well accented French to say what they had done recently.

174 Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 overall are rather below average. GCSE A*-C grades over the past three years of pupils' first or only modern language have, on aggregate, been somewhat less than the national average and below the average of the school as a whole. The smaller number who

have taken their second language to GCSE, mostly higher attaining pupils, have achieved results above the national average. Girls' results have been well above those of boys. In lessons standards of spoken French and German are sound and some pupils have an understanding of the past tense. However, there is little evidence as yet of higher attaining pupils using a variety of tense and idiom or undertaking more demanding tasks in listening and writing. Middle and lower attainers, including those with SEN, have some success with speaking and can describe themselves, their family and pastimes with some confidence. Such pupils, however, have real difficulties with listening and writing in the foreign language.

175 At post 16 standards in both languages are well in line with expectations. Results at A Level have been strong, although numbers are too small to discern trends. In 1998 seven out of the ten pupils taking A Level French and German achieved grades A, B or C - comfortably above the national average. Current Year 13 pupils converse freely and with fair accuracy in French. Year 12 German and French pupils are beginning to clear the gap between the simple demands of GCSE and those of A Level. Their spoken and written language is as yet undeveloped, but comprehension is sound and overall standards are as expected.

176 At Key Stage 3 the progress pupils make both in individual lessons and over time is mostly better than expected. This applies equally to lower attaining pupils and those with SEN, and to those taking German as their second language in Year 9. Progress is largely responsive to the quality of teaching. In Key Stage 3 teaching is at its most effective with the result that pupils make strong headway in their acquisition of new language and the skills to express it. By the end of a Year 8 German lesson, for example, middle attaining pupils could speak full sentences in the past tense about things they had purchased. Their confidence and fluency increased markedly during the lesson in response to strong teaching that created good opportunities to practise new language. At this level pupils' positive attitudes to language learning provide a further stimulus to good progress.

177 At Key Stage 4 pupils make less satisfactory progress. Teaching at this level is less rigorous and engaging than at Key Stage 3 and some pupils, mostly boys, are not as well motivated or responsive. Also, some sets in Key Stage 4 contain a wider range of attainment than is desirable and teachers cannot always undertake higher grade work with pupils capable of it. In some lower attaining sets progress towards the end of the double period is slower than during the first half. Some pupils have difficulty sustaining concentration for the full seventy minutes. Progress at post 16 is strong. Pupils have developed mature attitudes and thrive on good teaching in small groups. The best gains at this stage are made when fluent teaching in the foreign language encourages lively debate and full, accurate response.

178 Many pupils have a positive attitude to learning languages, especially in Key Stage 3. They clearly enjoy languages, show enthusiasm for their work and eagerness to answer questions. Most pupils sustain concentration well, settling to work readily and generally without reminder. Younger pupils are fully accustomed to paired and group work activities, collaborate sensibly and can be trusted to carry out unsupervised tasks. Pupils respond very favourably to the audio-visual programme which demands a high level of independence and motivation. In Key Stage 4 pupils' attitudes and behaviour are much more variable. Higher attaining pupils are generally well disposed to their work and behave with maturity. Among others, however, the majority of whom are boys, there is a culture promoting the view that languages are not important and as such do not merit priority or special effort.

179 The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in almost every lesson. In six out of ten lessons, most of them in Key Stage 3, teaching is good or very good. Teachers have a very secure grasp of the languages they teach and are proficient in both French and German. A strength of much of the foreign language teaching is the consistency with which teachers use the language as the principal means of communication in the classroom. The benefits of this are apparent in pupils' comprehension

and their good pronunciation. When the language is used inconsistently or too little, pupils speak with less confidence.

180 Much of the teaching, particularly at Key Stage 3 and post 16, is challenging and rigorous. The pace of work is brisk but thorough; new language is systematically drilled and rehearsed; pupils are kept busy and involved in tasks that extend them. Teaching is enhanced by the introduction of language “prompt sheets” which encourage pupils to make active use of language in the classroom to make their wishes felt. Teachers start their lessons very effectively with a roll call requiring responses in French or German. Planning of lessons is mostly good and is at its best when teachers do not keep too rigidly to the textbook, using their own materials instead. The new audio-visual programme which allows pupils to work at their own pace at a variety of activities, including ICT, is a very fruitful innovation.

181 At Key Stage 4 teaching is less effective or demanding than at Key Stage 3. At this stage there needs to be more rigour in what is expected of pupils of all levels of attainment, but in particular those capable of higher grades at GCSE. To this end teachers should use, and insist that pupils use, more of the foreign language in the classroom, and create more opportunities for drilling and practice. Taped comprehensions should be exploited for the teaching of listening skills. More could be done to extend and enrich the experience of higher attainers and enhance the motivation of those pupils, mostly boys, who have difficulty with languages.

182 There are some aspects of the MFL curriculum which have an adverse effect on standards. Sets in Key Stage 3 are shared with a number of other subjects and are not able to be timetabled together, so there are restrictions on movement between sets for pupils who are inappropriately placed. A few classes are taught by more than one teacher, creating a loss of continuity and communication. Arrangements in Key Stage 4 do not always allow sets to be well balanced with pupils of similar aptitude so that some groups contain a wide band of attainment. This restricts opportunities to teach to the highest level. The school’s policy of offering Latin in addition to French or German as an alternative second foreign language in Year 9, while commendable in itself, creates tensions and unbalances the numbers taking up the modern language. There should be further consideration of how strong linguists could be encouraged to continue their second language to GCSE.

183 The department enjoys effective, forward looking and very supportive leadership. Relationships between staff are now very good, encouraging frequent informal dialogue and the sharing of ideas and resources. Good arrangements are in place for monitoring and reviewing the performance of staff through classroom observation. Assessment of pupils’ work, occurring regularly with results clearly communicated to pupils, is a real strength of the department’s work, as are its comprehensive handbook and schemes of work. School visits to France and Germany are a positive feature likely to enhance motivation. The department’s new accommodation, spacious and very well appointed with outstanding displays, provides an excellent learning environment. Resources are mostly sufficient and up to date, but there are not enough textbooks in Key Stage 4 to allow pupils to take one home for reading and revision. There would be considerable benefits from the employment of a foreign language assistant should this become possible.

184 Over the past four years since the last inspection the department’s strategic focus has centred upon vital areas of administration which needed improving and updating, such as policy documents, schemes of work and resources. In addition there have been staffing instabilities which have now largely been put right. All this has been achieved to very good effect and the department is efficiently administered and has strong unity of purpose. Now the focus should be shifted to the key objective of driving up standards, particularly in Key Stage 4, through the improvement of its teaching methods and the raising of expectations. It needs a clear plan for the means by which it intends to improve GCSE grades and tackle the disparity in performance between girls and boys. To this end the department should meet more frequently to discuss these matters. In view of its good leadership and the unity and

commitment of its staff the department is well placed to make further improvements and raise standards.
2.

Music

185 By the end of Key Stage 3 levels of attainment are above average. Pupils in Year 7 play rhythm games that require them to sustain a high level of concentration. Their responses in this are ready and alert. They find this work challenging, but already they are aware of the need to co-operate with other performers, which they do well. In their taped compositions on a story of events, the highest attainers exploit changes in pitch and timbre. All compositions are well thought out and prepared. In Year 8, pupils' compositions on 'The Awakening of Time', show a greater awareness of structure with effective use of instrumental timbres and textures. Effective use is made of a single drum in the middle of a piece and of rapidly alternating semitones on the piano in the opening of another. Pupils in Year 8 quickly learn to play Jack Points Pavane on the keyboard or glockenspiel. This is because they know and use the notation and because they develop efficient practising skills. Year 9 pupils listen carefully to Mahler's First Symphony and correctly recognise the techniques of variation which they then use as a starting point for their own variations on Frère Jacques. Recorded examples of arrangements of Wimoweh and Kijé's March are assured and confident and make subtle use of instrumental timbre and low registration for the melody.

186 By the end of Key Stage 4 levels of attainment are above average. Pupils in Year 10 work at a paired free composition to exploit instrumental timbre. Although not all groups successfully employ all the timbres which have been explored initially, several of these compositions do make good use of variety and are imaginative and quite witty. No pupils at present are taking GCSE music in Year 11.

187 No pupils are at present taking A level music. A non-examination modular expressive arts course, which is part of core studies, is popular among post 16 pupils, although no lesson was available for inspection.

188 According to teachers' assessments in 1997 and 1998 at the end of Key Stage 3 more pupils achieved and worked beyond expectations than nationally. In the school 81% of pupils achieved or worked beyond expectations, compared to 61% nationally. 1999 results were an improvement on these, with 84% of pupils achieving and working beyond expectations. One pupil achieved exceptional performance. In the past insufficient pupils have taken the GCSE examination to make comparisons with national averages reliable. However in 1996 and 1997 most pupils took the examination at the end of Year 10. All pupils who took the examination in Year 10 in 1997 gained A*-C. The majority of pupils taking the examination at the end of Year 10 gained grades A*-C and all pupils gained A*-G. In 1999 although results were not quite so strong for grades A*-C, all pupils were again successful and considering that this was also taken at the end of Year 10, shows remarkably good progress. Post 16 pupils do not regularly take the subject at A level. However, in 1998 three pupils took the examination and gained an A and two B awards.

189 Progress is good through Key Stage 3 as pupils learn to control their performances. Compositions become more sophisticated and pupils show a greater ability to develop and refine musical ideas in their compositions. They can handle longer and more complex structures and they develop a more sensitive awareness of sound. In individual lessons progress is also good. This is due to challenging but achievable tasks, enthusiastic teaching and varied activities that are cumulative and help pupils to understand the relationship between aspects of the subject. Progress is also due to good concentration by pupils, which many can sustain over a long period of time. Where concentration is less good, as in one lower attaining set, progress is more difficult to sustain. For the highest attainers

varied extra-curricular activities and good instrumental lessons support good progress. In Year 10, pupils make good progress with their listening tasks because these are closely related to their creative work and because good teaching rehearses this regularly, drawing closely on pupils' work to reinforce listening skills.

190 Pupils' attitudes to music are very good. They like music and are opting for the subject in greater numbers. There are fifteen in the GCSE group in Year 10. They are enthusiastic and keen to sing and to play instruments, which they treat with care and respect. Their behaviour is very good, and they are courteous to each other and to teachers. Collaborative work in small groups and pairs is productive because relationships are strong and pupils support each other. Their evaluative comments about each other's work are respectful as well as perceptive. Their practice of instruments in class and in their own time shows good developing work skills and good examples of personal study are evident in Year 7's research project on Benjamin Britten.

191 Teaching is very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable; they are very good pianists and directors, and as such provide excellent role models for the pupils. Lessons are very well planned to include a variety of activities. These not only challenge the pupils but also provide a logical and enlightening route through the subject matter to enable pupils to understand the cohesive nature of music. Teachers manage pupils very well overall and teaching is at its best when ground rules in the classroom are firmly maintained. The teaching in instrumental lessons is lively and enthusiastic.

192 The department is very well managed. There is good leadership and monitoring of the quality of provision. The lively ethos of the department successfully attracts pupils to musical extra-curricular activities. Since the last inspection improvement of the department has been a priority. Teaching and the materials provided for pupils now take account of the levels of attainment of every pupil, and equipment has been satisfactorily up-graded. The extra-curricular activities including several choirs and a promising Jazz Band, directed by the peripatetic brass teacher, now provide flexible but worthwhile enrichment. Several members of staff also take part. Performances of 'Let it Be' and particularly 'Gaudete' were memorable, of a high musical standard and showed considerable commitment in performance. Unfortunately to date the school has been unable to improve or replace the temporary classroom, which is totally inappropriate accommodation, particularly when compared to the fine music block. This classroom is in a poor state of repair, time consuming to organise in lessons, and acoustically poor.

2. Physical Education

193 At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are above average in most areas. This is particularly the case in games: for example in both girls' netball and boys' soccer pupils can use a wide variety of passes accurately and consistently. Within the key stage standards are above average in mixed gymnastics in Year 8 where both girls and boys can produce original sequences of movement showing sustained balance and overall control. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are broadly average amongst pupils in the core programme. Levels of personal fitness are good and in games, notably basketball and netball, there are individual players who play the game well, showing good knowledge and understanding. In Year 10 soccer, many boys can pass the ball well and show clear understanding of the need to develop support play as effective team players. Girls are generally better than boys in mixed hockey and are more confident in possession of the ball. In those classes leading to GCSE qualifications overall standards are higher, particularly in Year 10, in both practical and theoretical aspects of the subject. Work in folders and in class shows clear understanding and knowledge of anatomy and physiology and a well-developed ability to use specialist terminology accurately and regularly. The most recent results in GCSE show an upward trend over 4 years with 1998 and 1999 A*-C grades well above the expected national standards. In the A level course, standards of written work in both year groups are above average and in practical work many students demonstrate their ability to combine good quality performance with a clear understanding of the principles of physical fitness.

194 At Key Stage 3 most pupils make good progress including those with SEN who are fully integrated into the programme and benefit from additional support and carefully constructed programmes that enable them to gain confidence and make progress. Standards in games clearly improve over time and in Year 8 gymnastics most pupils exercise increasingly improved control over their movements in building sequences. Very good progress has been made in Year 8 rugby where both the standard of play and the boys' understanding of the game have developed rapidly over the last two seasons. The overall pace of progress in Key Stage 4 is not so pronounced. Progress over time is clearer than progress in individual lessons and there is a difference between year groups. Boys in Year 10 play soccer to a good standard reflecting well how they have improved, especially in teamwork, over time. In examination classes progress is mainly good especially in pupils' knowledge and understanding of the theory of physical education.

195 Almost all pupils have a very positive approach to their lessons. They work eagerly, with commitment and are able to sustain their efforts over long periods of time. The subject is popular as indicated clearly by the numbers of pupils who study for GCSE and A level qualifications and those who regularly participate in team activities. In lessons pupils listen carefully, watch demonstrations and work well with others in a whole variety of activities. The way in which pupils accept responsibility maturely and willingly, in paired working with lower attainers, for example, and so help them to develop a greater understanding of how to improve, is excellent. The high quality of these working relationships amongst pupils and of those between pupils and their teachers is a feature of the department.

196 The quality of teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. All lessons are well planned and activities well organised, clearly reflecting the high quality of the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject. This is particularly so in examination classes. There are consistently high expectations of pupils' participation, performance and behaviour by all teachers. Activities are appropriately challenging, there are clear instructions, explanations and demonstrations and opportunities are given for checking on progress and reviewing performance. The predominant style is encouraging and supportive within a clear, firm framework, successfully designed to promote high standards. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements and arrangements for assessment are properly in place.

197 The current programmes of study make most effective use of the experience, expertise and facilities available in the department. The programme of extra-curricular sport and games provided by subject specialists is very popular, involves large numbers of pupils and makes a valuable contribution to the school's provision for its community. The formal assessment programme currently in place relies too heavily on broad, general language. The high quality of assessment in examination classes indicates that there would be benefits from developing more detailed performance targets in other areas. Attention to the language of assessment would give pupils and their parents a clearer view of the standards reached and the progress made.

198 The activities of the department are very well organised; the team of teachers is very well led. A most positive ethos for physical education has been developed and is now well sustained. The present programmes make excellent use of the balance of expertise and experience available. Overall the specialist facilities are good. The extensive playing fields are kept in excellent condition by the groundsman and this makes a clear contribution to the standards reached in games. The list of those pupils who go on and represent the school in a wide range of sports is impressive.

199 Since the last inspection the department has worked hard to raise standards. Most recent examination results in GCSE are very good, continuing an improved trend and in A level the newly introduced course is proving a valuable extension to the curriculum. The quality of teaching is now consistently good and the department is well placed to continue to further develop its assessment practice. At present the school has no sports hall to enable pupils, teachers and the community to benefit from a wider range of indoor activities.

2. Religious Education

2.

200 Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are below average, though the attainment of pupils in some individual lessons is in line with the national average. Overall, however, attainment is below average, especially in Years 8 and 9. Pupils' knowledge is insufficiently extensive for them to use religious language with confidence and their grasp of the main features of the traditions studied is insecure. Written work in this key stage is often restricted to brief notes or lists of facts. Pupils are encouraged to develop empathetic skills in handling religious issues, but their ability to evaluate beliefs in a structured and systematic way is below average.

201 The progress of pupils overall is poor, though the progress of many pupils in individual lessons is satisfactory. They extend their knowledge of selected features of religion, especially of founders and important personalities and develop confidence in expressing personal viewpoints. Good progress was observed in a Year 7 class studying the life of Moses. Pupils were reinforcing previous learning, exploring the need for rules of behaviour and developing confidence in expressing their views to the group. The progress of pupils in the later stages of the key stage is poor. Written work is undeveloped and does not adequately support a more mature and informed understanding of religious belief and practice.

202 The response of pupils in Key Stage 3 is good. They are well behaved, prepared to settle to the tasks set and relate well to each other. Very good responses were observed in a Year 7 class considering rules for living. Pupils were evidently involved, several made unprompted contributions to discussion and expressed their views fluently and with confidence. Lack of time in the single period lessons in this key stage often prevents teachers from building on the willingness of pupils to respond and to participate actively in lessons.

203 Insufficient time is allocated to religious education in Key Stage 4 and post 16 to provide adequate coverage of the agreed syllabus. During the inspection it was not possible to inspect religious education at these stages.

204 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Lessons are purposeful, expectations of pupils are clearly stated and classroom management generally effective, though on occasion slow pace and unstructured talk limits opportunities to develop pupils' own contributions to lessons. Very good teaching was observed in a Year 7 class. This was characterised by a brisk start to the lesson, good questioning prompting a ready response from pupils and willingness to adapt the direction of the lesson to take account of pupils' interests. Good relationships and respect for pupils is a feature of the teaching throughout this key stage.

205 Pupils' learning is enhanced by visits to the Cathedral and a synagogue in Norwich, and to a Hindu temple. A "faith trail" devised by teachers, introduces pupils to Christian communities in Diss. Visitors from the Buddhist and Jewish communities and from local church groups have also contributed to lessons. The school has also hosted an exhibition to explain and educate about the Holocaust. The limited time for the subject restricts opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness and response to spiritual issues.

206 The curriculum is based on the Local Agreed Syllabus, but concentrates too heavily on the content of faith traditions, and does not provide sufficient opportunities for reflection and personal response by pupils to the themes studied. The scheme of work is currently being reviewed to provide greater variety of activity for pupils and more interactive lessons. Assessment is undeveloped and does not cover the full range of attainment statements set out in the agreed syllabus. Time allocation in Key Stage 3 is insufficient to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus in full. In Key Stage 4 the PSE syllabus provides possibilities to consider religious belief in discussing social and moral issues and at post 16 a core module includes aspects of religion. These, however, are not planned to implement religious education in the coherent and specific way required by the agreed syllabus, so that statutory requirements are not being met at Key Stage 4 or post 16. In this respect there has been no improvement since the last inspection.

207 The department is led by an experienced and committed teacher who is also head of PSE and sociology and responsible for post 16 general studies, in addition to teaching A level history. Only a minority of lessons are taught by this experienced specialist teacher, and the management of the subject is only one of several responsibilities which he has. This has inevitably delayed the implementation of necessary changes and developments such as review of the scheme of work and assessment procedures. Teaching is monitored and development targets have been set. Staff development for non-specialists has been provided. There is an evident desire by staff to promote the subject but also a sense of embattlement over time allocations and accommodation, which affects the ethos in which the subject is taught.

208 A number of teachers have shared the teaching of RE in recent years, and there has not always been continuity of staffing from year to year. Steps have been taken more recently to reduce the number of teachers teaching the subject and to develop a permanent team. This is now beginning to show results in a greater sense of confidence and professional competence in the teaching of the subject. The school has effectively responded to these issues noted in the last report and there has been definite improvement in teachers' knowledge and methodology. Appropriate professional development has supported these improvements.

209 Accommodation for the subject is poor. Almost three-quarters of all lessons are taught in a shabby and dilapidated mobile classroom that provides no stimulus to pupils' learning; lessons taught by another non-specialist are in another subject area, making it difficult to deploy a wide range of

resources or to display pupils' work. Only four classes are taught in the room that may be regarded as the departmental base.

210 Resources have been improved since the last inspection, but are still inadequate to meet the needs of pupils across the full range of attainment. Textbooks cover basic features of the course at Key Stage 3, but are often difficult for lower attaining pupils, and there are few artefacts to support the teaching of the world faiths syllabus. There is little support material for pupils with SEN.

211 The school has made improvements since the last inspection in teachers' competence and methodology which has improved the quality of teaching. Inadequacies in time allocation, resources and accommodation are still depressing pupils' attainment and progress and restricting the subject's contribution to their spiritual development

2. Vocational Education

212 The introduction of GNVQ Part One into the Key Stage 4 curriculum, linked to the significant expansion of post 16 GNVQ programmes, now provides progression opportunities for pupils of most abilities. This addresses one of the issues raised in the last report. This post 16 expansion is economically organised through joint teaching of advanced GNVQ Years 12 and 13 business pupils, and by combining intermediate level business and leisure and tourism programmes. Although attracting far more pupils than previously, numbers in each programme are still relatively small, helping tutors to cope well with this demanding teaching situation. There is very effective part-time administrative support linked to good planning and scheduling of lessons. The co-ordination of all aspects of vocational provision is very good. Course management is very positive, thoughtful, well documented and strives to engender a consistent understanding and application of standards across a team of 11 teachers. There is an effective school system for ensuring that pupils' work meets the quality standards of the vocational awarding body.

213 Teaching in most lessons is good and occasionally very good indeed. Teachers give clear explanations to establish a framework for pupils' research. Pupils are encouraged to gather evidence through interviews and questionnaires, as well as using printed and Internet sources. There is an adequate mix of teaching and learning styles to provide variety and interest, with an effort to emphasise learning by experience. An expanding collection of interpretative assignment briefs, devised to reflect the vocational context, provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to meet the evidence criteria. The vocational validity and reliability of these assignments should be checked before they are used with pupils. Work experience is well organised and complemented by a supportive team of local business personnel who provide advice and guidance.

214 Pupils make good progress in relation to varied prior attainment. This applies across the range of programmes. There is due emphasis on the development of key skills. Some post 16 pupils however, who already have good GCSE attainment, could be challenged to tackle communication, number and IT skills at higher levels than the minimum competence specified for each programme. For some pupils the quality of grading theme evidence improves well during the programmes. Assessment of some of these themes does not always take account of all of the criteria. Pupils have a good attitude and co-operate very well in the combined teaching groups. Most confidently advance views and opinions and present their research findings to others. As pupils become more adept at planning and organising, they increasingly take responsibility for their own learning within the guidance framework provided by the staff.

215 Attainment is just above average when judged against national statistics. Some pupils do much better than this, with well-managed portfolios of reliable primary and secondary evidence, which directly target the requirements set out in the programme specifications. These pupils make effective and sometimes fluent use of the technical language of the vocational area, presenting their findings in appropriate business reporting style. Only a small number of intermediate candidates participated in the programmes in 1998 and 1999. The proportion gaining the full award in 1998 was much higher than the national figure with nearly half of the candidates securing merit or distinction awards. Nearly all of the pupils gained the full award in 1999. Pupils on the new Part One programme have made a good start and are already producing commendable work.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

216 The inspection was carried out by a team of 14 inspectors, including a lay inspector. During the week of the inspection over 200 lessons were inspected as well as registrations and assemblies. A number of extra-curricular activities were seen. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior staff, heads of department and holders of other posts of responsibility. Curriculum, pastoral and administrative matters were discussed with many other members of staff. Inspectors looked at the practical and written work of many pupils. All of the available work in core subjects and the reports of a representative sample of pupils from each year group were scrutinised. Planned discussions were held with these pupils and informal conversations with many more. Before the inspection the Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 26 parents. The team considered the responses of 390 parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

2. **217
INDICATORS**

DATA AND

2. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Year 7 to Year 13	1083	15	80	45

2.

Teachers and classes

2. **Qualified teachers (Year 7 to Year 13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	63.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.03

2. **Education support staff (Year 7 to Year 13)**

Total number of education support staff:	17
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	355.6
Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76.2
Average teaching group size:	KS3 25
	KS4 23

2. Financial data

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income	2,129,283
Total Expenditure	2,297,474
Expenditure per pupil	2239.25
Balance brought forward from previous year	55,960
Balance carried forward to next year	40,857

2. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1,083

Number of questionnaires returned: 390

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	14	67	13	5	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	27	62	7	4	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	50	26	6	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	13	69	11	5	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	24	58	10	6	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	25	65	8	3	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	25	56	13	5	2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	16	60	12	9	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	19	60	17	3	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	18	61	14	5	3
My child(ren) like(s) school	28	56	9	4	3

Note: Nil responses are not included, therefore sum of percentages may not = 100%